

Is education a tool of empowerment for girls?

*A case study of teenage girls in township primary schools in
Cape Town, South Africa.*

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ABSTRACT

Education has been used as a catalyst for change in positive and negative direction, both on a micro and macro level. In the context of South Africa, education was used as a tool of segregation during the apartheid era. This study sets out to investigate if education can be seen as a tool of empowerment, for South African girls, based on fieldwork conducted in outskirts of Cape Town in South Africa in October/November 2008. The research approach used in the study is of qualitative nature and I interviewed girls from two township primary schools in two different focus groups and four individual interviews, together with classroom observation. The conceptual framework is based on the composition of empowerment and its multifaceted nature. The theoretical framework is based on the ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979), implicating the mutual effects between an individual and his/her surroundings, in addition to future time perspective theory (Nuttin 1985) and “quality education” indicators (UNICEF 2002).

The empirical findings in coherence with the conceptual and theoretical framework indicate two main issues, first off; despite the issue of language of instruction, the girls do receive “quality education”, within the social and economic frames of the schools. Secondly, there is ambivalence towards whether or not the girls’ home situation creates optimal development situations and in turn makes the girls receptive to the education. In light of these findings, and in combination with the girls’ positive perceptions of what education can do for their future, it leads me to conclude that, for these specific girls, education does lead to empowerment.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
EFA	Education for All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EST	Ecological System Theory
FTP	Future Time Perspective
GAD	Gender and Development
GETT	Gender Equity Task Team
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GPI	Gender Parity Index
LO	Life Orientation
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PE	Psychological Empowerment
SADC	South African Development Community
SES	Socio-economic status
WDEFA	World Declaration on Education for All

WID Women in Development

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to answer the question: Can education be used as a tool of empowerment for girls in South Africa? Education is regarded as one of the greatest catalysts for change for individuals and for the development of nations. Two primary schools on the outskirts of Cape Town, South Africa set the stage for this study. Empowerment is a concept that is interpreted in several ways and therefore needs to be clearly defined for the purpose of answering the research question above. In this thesis the concept of empowerment entails that the girls are first and foremost empowered through education at a personal level, and secondly at a collective level. Empowerment and the term “power” refers to the notion of “power to”, which is defined by creating new possibilities and actions without domination and the belief that it is achieved by “... increasing one’s ability to resist and challenge ‘power over’” (Kelly 1992 cited in Rowland 1997:12). Furthermore, in the words of Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) “Education, in the mainstream, is generally considered a path to individual and national empowerment” (Abu-Saad and Champagne 2006:3). In this thesis I will investigate whether or not individual empowerment is a reality for a group of girls in South Africa.

To be able to answer whether education can be a tool of empowerment it is necessary to have a broad overview of all the aspects involved, which in turn will enable me to answer the research question. By looking at empowerment holistically, three elements need to be accounted for: first, a certain degree of “quality” needs to be present in the education the girls receive. Secondly, the girls need to be able and capable of understanding and consequently internalize their education. Thirdly, the girls need to be able to make use of their internalized knowledge, to create positive change for themselves, their families and society (UNICEF 2002). What does quality education entail for girls? What makes a girl receptive to education? Is the education that the girls receive transferable to their life and their future?

In light of the above mentioned factors I aim to answer if education can lead to empowerment for the South African girls that participated in this study.

1.1 Significance of the study

Providing all children access to primary education was the main focus of the Education for All (EFA) initiative, a result of the EFA World conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Progress has been made to reach this goal, however, numbers show that globally still more boys than girls receive the opportunity to go to school (UNESCO, 2010a). The issue of this ‘gender gap’ in primary education was also in focus during the EFA World Conference in Senegal, Dakar in 2000, where the world community renewed their commitment to reach the EFA goals, especially focusing on the girls. EFA’s fifth goal in particular is relevant for this thesis:

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girl’s full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality (UNESCO 2009a:2).

Each year UNESCO publishes a Global Monitoring Report (GMR) focusing on the global progression of the EFA goals. The statistics from the 2009 monitoring report shows that the gross enrolment ratio (GER)¹ on (gender parity index) GPI in South Africa was 0.97 at the end of the school year 2006 (UNESCO 2009a). Furthermore, statistics from the 2009 report show that in South Africa the net enrolment rate (NER)² on GPI was 1.00 at the end of the school year 2006 (UNESCO 2009a). As these numbers show, South Africa has reached the goal of gender parity in access to school.

A challenge, however, is to measure the progression of all six EFA goals, and because not all of them are operationalized, it makes them difficult to measure. Access to school, for instance, is a challenging concept to define. At the simplest level it may refer to children being enrolled to school. However, enrollment on its own is not equivalent to meaningful access, according to Morrow (2007 cited in UNICEF 2009a:83). “Access to school is

¹ Definition of GER: Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year (UNESCO 2010b:online).

² Definition of NER: Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population (UNESCO 2010b:online).

meaningful only when it enables children's 'epistemic' access; or access to learning and content knowledge" (Morrow 2007 cited in UNICEF 2009:83).

In addition, the concept of quality is difficult to measure. As I stated earlier education needs to be of a certain degree of quality for one to properly answer if education can be used as a tool of empowerment. I will throughout this thesis base the concept of "quality" as it is operationalized in a report published by UNICEF, (2002) entitled "Quality Education for All, from a girl's point of view". According to this report, quality education is defined by five key dimensions; what the girls bring with them, environments, content, processes and outcomes, all which will be discussed in greater depths throughout this study.

The outcomes of providing quality education for girls can empower them to believe in themselves, to stand up for their rights, and to have access to society. In addition education can provide them knowledge that will reduce diseases such as HIV/Aids or reduce, for example, teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, educated girls can empower the community and the society. Unfortunately, the dangers in the present society might prevent girls from achieving their educational aspirations and achievement of a career. Nevertheless, success alone for some will be worth the effort and its effects will hopefully trickle down on the rest of society.

1.2 Problem statement

As mentioned, the main objective of this study is to investigate if education is a tool of empowerment, using two primary township schools in South Africa as a case study. In light of this I have created three specific objectives which will assist me in answering the main objective.

- How do the girls experience their home situation?
- How do the girls experience their school situation?
- How do the girls perceive their future?

The questions are asked to investigate and find out the subjective experiences of the girls about their home life, their school situation and how they perceive their future in terms of the education they receive. These questions are posed in light of how I believe that by looking at

empowerment holistically one sees the different areas leading to empowerment, making it possible to answer whether education leads to empowerment or not. In the sense of what the girls bring with them from home (their capabilities to receive learning), the quality of education and in what way one can imagine that the education the girls receive can benefit them personally and the society, I hope to answer whether or not education leads to empowerment.

1.3 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study concerns the fact that both I as the researcher, and many of the informants, do not have English as our mother tongue. Yet, English was the common language used to communicate in during the collection of data for this study and in the reporting (the writing of this thesis). Although the focus group and the individual interviews were conducted with a translator present, the conversations did not always go as smoothly as it might have had everyone had the same mother tongue.

Furthermore, time limitation was an issue. The fieldwork was conducted during a six week period which is not a considerable amount of time to get to know the society one investigates. In addition, during the time period of the fieldwork (Oct-Nov) the schools and teachers were busy with preparations for the end of the year exams, which resulted in fewer days at the schools as I had hoped for.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. Chapter one has shown insight into the significance that lies behind the thesis and sheds light on the problem statement, research area and presented the research focus. Chapter two serves to set the stage by providing a conceptual framework where the key issue, empowerment, is discussed. In this chapter I also provide the reader with contextual information. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the concept of empowerment, it's composition, it's different uses and its relevance to educating girls from townships in South Africa on a personal and collective level. In the second part of the chapter, I will look at why I think South Africa is a good example of place

for research, with regards to the country's educational history and its previous use of education as a tool of segregation for majority of the girls. Furthermore, the contemporary educational situation in South Africa will be discussed.

Chapter three introduces the theoretical framework of the study. The first section presents the main elements of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System Theory, in which several factors which affect a child's development, socially and in turn academically are discussed. The second section of the theoretical chapter is based on Nuttin's (1985) Future Time Perspective Theory, which entails aspects of one view's on his/her future and the degree of motivation to succeed academically. The last section of the theoretical framework is based on the UNICEF's (2002) concept of "quality" education, including aspects of educational content, language of instruction and teacher-learner relationships, and how these elements may effect a child's academic achievement.

The fourth chapter presents the methodological aspects of this study, emphasizing the qualitative nature of the research and discussing aspects such as research strategy, design and the different data collection methods used. I also discuss challenges and the issue of trustworthiness regarding the study.

Chapter five presents the main findings of the research and is divided into three sections (home, school and future) coinciding with the specific objectives of the study, in addition to presenting the process of analysis of the data.

Chapter six contains the final discussion of the thesis, combining the conceptual and theoretical framework presented in chapter two and three together with the main findings presented in chapter five. In summing up this chapter I attempt to answer the principal research questions asked in this study.

2. BACKGROUND – SETTING THE STAGE

This chapter looks at the concept of empowerment and the relationship between empowerment and education. Empowerment is a word used in different arenas and involving different people. Empowerment is a process and a product, targeting specific individuals, and the society at larger. Due to the complex nature of the concept this section works as both a presentation of the concept and also as a discussion in itself allowing the reader to understand the operationalization of the concept intended for this study.

Following this discussion I will look into the concept of education and disclose the reasons behind the choice to make girl's education the target for this thesis. In addition a brief review of literature on the topic of education as an empowering situation will be presented.

In the second section of this chapter I will give a brief introduction of South Africa, to set the stage, before presenting a look at how education was used as a tool for segregation during the apartheid regime. Following I will briefly introduce the educational aspects of South Africa in present time, focusing on the key educational elements that I have chosen to highlight. Subsequently I will discuss some educational elements from a situational analysis report of children in South Africa (UNICEF 2009a), which contributes to setting the stage for this study.

Education in South Africa has been used in the past as a tool for segregation and separation between different racial groups that exist in the country. The ripple effects of apartheid are still present in the country, however, democracy and equality for all citizens across race, gender and religion has come a long way since the abolishment of apartheid and it is a top priority for the country. Education is one of the sectors that is invested in the most to assist the country towards a more democratic country.

2.1 Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has become one of the most widely used terms in development rhetoric. Development organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and international organizations often set empowerment as a goal on their agendas. Some

claim that the term has become a “buzz word” used by both governmental and non-governmental organizations as a tool to secure financial funding (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Yet the concept is one of the least understood in terms of how it is to be measured or observed. Brock-Utne (2006) discusses the reclaiming of the concept of empowerment. She argues that the word empowerment must be reclaimed and be used in its original meaning and for its intended purpose, which she claims is power to the people, self-reliance and self-determination.

Empowerment is used in arenas as different as business management and labor unions, banking and education, health care and ecology, although not necessarily concerning the concept of power accusation (Stromquist 1993). Due to the different uses of the concept and in different contexts, one specific definition of empowerment is yet to be set. However, for one to gain a better understanding of the concept, it might be helpful to look at the origin of the concept among popular movements, returning to possible definitions of the concept later in the text.

2.1.1 ‘Empowerment’ - its composition

Stromquist (1993) traces the origin of the concept of empowerment back to the United States civil rights movement in the 1950’s to 1960s. It was started on the background of the need to abolish laws of segregation, laws which separated black African Americans from white Americans, in other words, legal and cultural inequalities on the basis of race. Brock-Utne (2006) suggests however that the empowerment concept was coined to be applied in the women’s movement in the mid 1970’s on the background of legal and cultural inequalities caused by gender. Empowerment has been and is still a vital concept within feminist discourse (Brock-Utne 2006). Feminist development theories such as ‘Women in Development’ (WID) and ‘Gender and Development’ (GAD) blossomed during the 1970’s and 1980’s. According to Rowland (1995) the concept of empowerment must be used in a context of oppression, since empowerment is about working to remove the existence and effects of unjust inequalities.

Some of the confusion about empowerment arises because the root concept ‘power’ is itself disputed (Rowland 1997). One must be aware that ‘power’ can take different forms in order

to fully comprehend the concept of empowerment. Rowland (1997) distinguishes between four forms of power:

- **Power over:** Controlling power, which may be responded to with compliance, resistance or manipulation
- **Power to:** Generative or productive power (sometimes incorporating or manifesting as forms of resistance or manipulation), which creates new possibilities and actions without domination.
- **Power with:** A sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together.
- **Power from within:** the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self-acceptance and self-respect which extends, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals (Rowland 1997:13).

Power has been the subject of discussion for centuries, from Hobbes and Machiavelli to Foucault and Giddens and it is found within many spheres. Within development discourse, a view of ‘development as Westernization’³ has come to dominate, and often the ‘power over’ aspect of empowerment is present. A classic example of this use of ‘power over’ can be seen with initiatives made in the West, by people in the West and people in the West implementing these initiatives upon people in the South. Although with the best intentions at heart and the goal to empower underprivileged women in, for instance Africa, the mistake many Western NGOs have made is to implement initiatives in the South that perhaps are more suited to a Western context. (See Brock-Utne 2006 for a further discussion about West-South dominant relationship). In turn, this means that power is something that can be bestowed by one person upon another. However, the difficulty with this interpretation is that if power can be bestowed upon a person, it can as easily be taken away (Rowland 1997).

By looking at the aspects of ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power from within’ one understands power more as a process, seeing empowerment in a different light than with ‘power over’. One aspect of ‘power to’ is a kind of leadership that comes from wanting to see a group achieve to the full extent of its capabilities, where there is no conflict of interest and that the group has set its own collective agenda (Rowland 1997). Kelly (1992) argues “I

³ The “West” is in this thesis used in reference to the capitalist and industrialized countries mostly in Western-Europe and North America. The West often stands for contrast to the “South”, which here stands for developing countries.

suspect it is ‘power to’ that the term empowerment refers to, and it is achieved by increasing one’s ability to resist and challenge ‘power over’” (Kelly 1992 cited in Rowland 1997:12).

2.1.2 For who is empowerment targeted?

As mentioned earlier, according to Stromquist (1993) and Brock- Utne (2006), the concept was coined during fights for freedom and power, e.g. the civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement. One of the similarities between these groups is that the ones ‘in control’ lack the willingness to see the needs of the oppressed and take them seriously. The oppressed must therefore themselves find ways to gain power, because power will not be given to them just by asking (Stromquist 1993). McWhirther (1990) claims that empowerment targets marginalized groups of people who for social, cultural, socioeconomic or racial reasons are not accepted or seen equals to the rest of the population. Stromquist (1993), in her notion of the concept, refers to suppressed *women* when she discusses empowerment and for whom it is targeted.

When using the concept of power in terms of ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power within’ in the empowerment, participation is a key word. In addition, emphasis is put on the fact that empowerment is a process, not merely an end goal. Rowland (1997) states that within the generative ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ interpretation of power, empowerment is concerned with the processes by which people become aware of their own interests and interests of others in order to both participate from a position of greater strength in decision making and actually to influence such decisions.

Rowland (1997) distinguishes between three dimensions of how empowerment can be experienced:

- **Personal:** developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression
- **Relational:** developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it
- **Collective:** where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on co-operation rather than competition (Rowland 1997:15).

The effect of how power gained on an individual level also empowers the society can be seen when for instance women are able to make their own money and in return contribute to the economic cycles that makes a society work. One such example is the ‘Shonglap Project’ in Bangladesh, which focuses on basic education for girls (Strømme Foundation 2009). This project is an ongoing program developed by the Norwegian founded NGO, Strømme Foundation in co operation with a partner organization in Bangladesh. The main objective of the program is to educate discriminated girls in rural areas in basic literacy, life skills and vocational skills, in order to make them personally and economically independent and self-reliant. The participants decide themselves if they want to join the program and are a part of deciding how the educational aspects of the program are developed, based on their needs. By teaching the girls basic skills and giving them a microcredit loan to jumpstart their own business the girls individually and the community are empowered, in the sense of ‘power to’ (Strømme Foundation 2009).

In the United Nation’s tenth edition in the ‘*Women and World Development Series*’ (Karl 1995) it is stated that the words *awareness*, *capacity building* and *participation* are central to the concept of empowerment. Awareness around issues involving women, gender discrimination, girls and women’s rights and their opportunities in society, is the first component. Second is capacity building and skills development, the ability to plan, organize and carry out activities and dealing with people in the society, and the third, being able to participate more in decision-making both inside and outside the home (Karl 1995). Women’s empowerment is a continuum of these interrelated and components.

2.1.3 Definitions of empowerment

Stromquist (1993) defines empowerment as a “process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society” (Stromquist 1993:13). While Lazo (1993) describes it as “a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources”(Lazo, 1993:25). McWhirther (1991) offers another definition, which Rowland (1997) puts to use to illustrate how empowerment works in the context of social work and education:

The **process** by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercises this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community (McWhirther 1991:224, emphasis in original).

McWhirther (1991), distinguishes between the ‘situation of empowerment’, where all four criteria are met and ‘an empowering situation’, where one or more of the conditions is in place or being developed.

Empowerment is a sociopolitical concept, and different cultural contexts determine in many ways how to approach it. Similar to McWhirther (1991) Stromquist (1993) sets four conditions to fully comprehend the concept of empowerment: cognitive, psychological, political and economic. The cognitive component supports the notion that empowerment is both a process and a product since it includes several steps of awareness and understanding. First one must become aware of the situation of subordination around you and then understand the conditions of this subordination (Freire 1972). One must subsequently understand the cause of the subordination and understand how one can acquire knowledge about the beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies in the given context to change their current position (Stromquist, 1993).

The second component that Stromquist (1993) sets as a criterion for understanding the empowerment process is psychological. This part entails that women develop feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. From gaining these emotions women gain power to act at personal and societal levels to improve their condition. In addition, this means the formation of the belief that they can succeed in change efforts. However, self-esteem and confidence of one’s self-worth is not something that a person can be taught or given; it must come from within the woman herself, although the conditions must be provided for these feelings to develop. According to Stromquist (1993), building of one’s self-image can be done through direct involvement of the women. “Women must participate in problem definition, the identification of concrete solutions to the problems, the implementation of these solutions, and the assessment of the efforts taken”(Stromquist 1993:15). Feeling in control over one’s life is an important aspect of the psychological component. Zimmerman (1995) compliments Stromquist’s (1993) idea of the psychological component of empowerment.

Zimmerman (1995) refers to the psychological aspect of empowerment as the personal dimension of empowerment previously referred to by Rowland (1997). According to Zimmerman (1995), psychological empowerment (PE) includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about recourses and factors that hinder or enhance one's chance of achieving those goals and efforts to fulfill the goals (Zimmerman 1995). Zimmerman (1995:588-90) distinguishes between three components of PE.

- Intrapersonal component of PE refers to how people think about themselves and includes domain-specific perceived control and self-efficacy, motivation to control, perceived competence, and mastery.
- Interactional component of PE refers to the understanding people have about their community and related sociopolitical issues.
- Behavioral component of PE refers to actions taken to directly influence outcomes.

Zimmerman's view on PE is similar to the theory of Future Time Perspective (FTP) which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The third element emphasized by Stromquist (1993) and which, according to her, is needed to strengthen the psychological element is economic resources. As previously mentioned, for the growth of self-esteem, certain conditions must be provided. One of these conditions is what Stromquist (1993) refers to as the economic component of her notion of empowerment. The economic component of empowerment requires that women take part in a productive activity, an activity that will let them have some degree of financial independence, no matter how small or hard to obtain in the beginning. According to Stromquist (1993) empirical studies support the notion that access to work increases a woman's economic independence, and with it creating a greater level of independence and self-worth.

The fourth component of empowerment leads to a political aspect. This aspect entails the ability to analyze the nearby environment in political and social terms. One needs to be able to... "organize and mobilize for change" (Stromquist 1993:15). An empowerment process takes first place at an individual level followed by at a collective level. The political element shows this clearly, "an empowerment process must involve individual awareness, and collective action is fundamental to the aim of attaining social transformation" (Stromquist 1993:15).

As McWhirther (1991) distinguishes between ‘the situation of empowerment’ and ‘an empowering situation’ I believe that if one or more of Stromquist’s (1993) dimensions of empowerment are present in a situation, then that situation in turn becomes ‘an empowering situation’. For instance the cognitive and psychological dimensions might be present in a classroom situation, in turn making it an empowering situation.

UNESCO focuses on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and has dedicated the decade from 2005 till 2014 as the UN Decade for Sustainable Development. The definition used by UNESCO for ESD, resembles to a large extent how I view the connection between education and empowerment, which I will turn to next. The definition is as follows:

Education for sustainable development aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions (UNESCO, 2009b).

2.2 Empowerment and education

Education, in the mainstream, is generally considered a path to individual and national empowerment (Abu-Saad and Champagne 2006:3).

The importance of education for girls and the benefits that return from educating girls has been stressed in a number of reports and conferences. ‘Save the Children’ published its tenth annual mothers report May 2009 in the series ‘State of the World Mother’s’ (Save the Children 2009). With titles such as ‘Saving the lives of Mothers and Newborns’ (Save the Children 2006), ‘The power and Promise of Girl’s Education’ (Save the Children 2005) and ‘Children having children’ (Save the Children 2004) they have contributed to raising awareness of the importance of education for girls and it’s benefits in the international community.

“Research consistently shows that education for girls is one of the most effective- if not the most effective- investments a nation can make to improve the health and prosperity of present and future generations” (Save the Children 2005:11).

2.2.1 Benefits of education

UNICEF’s annual ‘The State of The World’s Children’ series raise topics concerning the well fare of children around the world. Some of their latest publications are ‘Maternal and

Newborn Health’ (UNICEF 2009), ‘Child Survival’ (UNICEF 2008) and ‘Women and Children-The double dividend of gender equality’ (UNICEF 2007). ‘Girl’s Education and Development’ (UNICEF 2004) focuses on the relationship of girl’s education and development goals. It presents a multilayered case for investing in girl’s education as a strategic way to advance the development for both boys and girls. Girl’s education is a uniquely positive force for development and some of the long-term benefits that lie behind educating girls are enhanced economic development, education for the next generation, healthier families and fewer maternal deaths (UNICEF 2004). One of the main reasons behind the awareness around girls and women education is clear when one looks at the benefits that possibly arise from it.

The world community has had education for girls as a main pillar on their agenda for many years. As previously mentioned, the EFA initiative was launched, in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, connecting the world community to bring the benefits of education, to every citizen in every society. In the *World Declaration on Education for All* (WDEFA) the educational focus was targeted primarily on primary and basic education, with an emphasis on education for girls and women. Hoppers (1998) believe, however, that the Jomtien conference represented a missed opportunity to reclaim an education for freedom and self-reliance (Hoppers 1998 cited in Brock-Utne 2006:11). Due to slow progress during the 1990-2000 decade, the international community reaffirmed its commitment at the world conference in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000. The goals were set to be met within the year of 2015. As I have already mentioned, South Africa has reached gender parity in primary education, and it will be interesting to follow the country’s’ progress towards its achievement on the rest of EFA goal five (see 1.2), towards 2015.

Before moving on to review three studies connecting education to empowerment, I need to clarify the word “access” in greater depths. Many initiatives on education for girls use the word access as a key to social and economic well-being for girls (Unterhalter 1999). As if only gaining access to a school institution will automatically provide girls with an education that will empower them further in life. Factors such as pedagogical content and social setting which the school provides for the girls are often ignored (Unterhalter 1999). According to Morrow (2007 cited in UNICEF 2009a:83), the word access however, stands for more than just access or enrolment. He claims that one cannot call access “meaningful” based only on enrolment. “School and education is only meaningful if it enables children’s epistemic

access, indicating access to leaning and content knowledge” (Morrow 2007 cited in UNICEF 2009a:83).

Recognition of quality education and not only promoting “access” as enrolment to education has also been emphasizes by many of the world communities. In a UNICEF report from 2002 quality education for girls is the main theme. They state that ensuring access to school is not enough, it is equally and perhaps more important to ensure quality education. In addition, receiving education of poor quality is equivalent to receiving no education at all. Quality in education is dependent on several factors. First off, the learning environment must be gender-sensitive and a safe place for the girls and the content must include relevant curriculum which teaches girls valuable life skills and which reflect the context of the nation. The learners should be taught in a language which they are familiar with and on the belief that all children can learn. The benefits and outcomes that blossom from educating girls are multifaceted (UNICEF 2002). First of all, life skills and the confidence that the girls internalize is not only an empowering situation for them individually, it also enhances development at local and national levels (Save the Children 2005). Providing quality education also has generational benefits. Educated mothers have educated children, and over time, returns of the investment to send girls to school will become more visible to those who believe it only gives investment to send boys to school (UNICEF 2004).

The list of benefits of educating girls is long, in terms of aspects on the macro level, meaning benefits that will advance the society and the world. However, I think it is interesting to look closer at what benefits the girls personally, at a micro level, of receiving education. What is in it for them to go to school and get an education? UNICEF (2002) emphasizes girls’ education, first and foremost, as a human right and that education should be justified in that way. Through education girls get access to society in basic forms of reading newspapers and books and writing, being able to express themselves. Throughout the course of schooling and mastering different educational difficulties, girls gain self confidence and are able to believe in their own abilities, which may support them throughout life.

Many reports on education are based on statistics over how many girls are enrolled, how many girls graduated and what marks they received. But this kind of data does not say much about the education and its quality or lack thereof inside the school. This thesis will base its findings on what happens inside the “Black Box” (Murphy-Graham 2008), in other words,

what happens between the words of implementation (policies) and the outcomes (exam results and statistics).

2.2.2 Literature review

Stromquist (1993) focuses exclusively on adult women and non-formal education in her writings on empowerment. She believes that if empowerment was applied freely to changes only involving cognitive and psychological areas, that empowerment would not necessarily take form in collective action. However, she discusses indicators for empowerment that could be applied in formal education. Through formal education contributions towards gender awareness and equality between the sexes can be achieved via several routes. For one, textbooks should remove the gender stereotypes that identify women as subordinated to men. Second, teachers should be trained to be more gender sensitive, in other words that the school curricula should foster positive gender identities. According to Stromquist (1993) these elements are crucial predecessors to empowerment, but not empowerment itself.

Murphy-Graham (2008) argues on the other hand that education can trigger the empowerment process if it expands women's knowledge and understanding, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity. However, she claims that not all educational programs do this. Some of the aspects Murphy-Graham (2008) draws from her study that actually triggers the empowerment process are that the curriculum must be understood and not memorized, there must be practical application of the taught curriculum, each student should receive individual copies of the textbooks, and the curriculum must be interdisciplinary (Murphy-Graham 2008). According to Murphy- Graham (2008) all of these components must be visible if education will trigger the empowerment process. Further, the three components of knowledge, self-confidence and gender awareness must be intertwined in a way that they complement each other.

Before I turn to the second section of this chapter, namely taking a closer look at South Africa where this study takes place, I will present research by Unterhalter (1999) and her analysis of six autobiographies of South African women that went to school at two different periods in time (1920-1930 and 1950-1960).

On the basis of autobiographies for social inquiry by Steedman (1986) and Stanley (1992), Unterhalter (1999) analysed six of these, (four written by African women and two written by white women), to investigate how they see both their success and their schooling. In addition she explores the disjuncture between girls' success in school and lack of success in the labour market and how this can be attributed to not only structural features, but also the lack of identity formed in school. Furthermore, Unterhalter (1999) explores whether access to schooling leads to empowerment.

As mentioned above the first group of women received their education between 1920 and 1930. These women grew up in families with considerable material wealth, linked to farming, compared to the majority of the people at that time. However, the benefits these women could derive from this wealth was circumscribed by the gendered politics of the families. Furthermore, all three of these women experienced prejudice and discrimination during their youth, two of them on the basis of their skin colour and the white woman on the basis of her religious beliefs (she was Jewish). The second set of autobiographies that Unterhalter (1999) analysed, were written by three women that received their education between 1950 and 1960. These women have quite different backgrounds among them, compared to the first group of women. One of them was the daughter of a lawyer and lived in the city. The other was the daughter of a teacher and lived in the rural areas outside the city and the third woman, was daughter of a labourer and lived in the townships of the Cape Flats (Unterhalter 1999).

While the older generation of women (the ones who went to school between 1920-1930) write about good, idyllic rural childhoods, the violence and horror of apartheid was very visible in the childhoods of the younger writers (the women who went to school between 1950-1960). This was especially evident in the stories by the two black women from the younger group, which will briefly be presented next. One of them experienced that her mother was murdered by an apartheid security service assassination team, followed by the imprisonment of her father and her grandparents, before they had to leave from South Africa to London in exile. The second women experienced that herself and her friend were imprisoned, where they were tortured and some were murdered. Following imprisonment she was banished to a remote rural area, where she lived for seven years under police scrutiny and intimidation (Unterhalter 1999).

In the analysis of these autobiographies Unterhalter (1999) looks at each of the women's relationships with their mothers, in coherence with their experiences with female teachers. The older generation of women had all lost their mothers at an early age in their lives and these women consequently portrayed their female teachers as role models and as "...inspiring, enabling them to excel through a mixture of learning and love" (Unterhalter 1999:56). The issue of, and the importance of a good teacher learner relationship, will be investigated in more detail further on in the thesis. The younger generation of women on the other hand, portray through their autobiographies the importance their mothers have had in their lives, and perhaps because of that, they had not developed as strong bonds to female teachers as the older generation of women did. Even the woman that experienced her mother being murdered felt this motherly connection, "... nothing that is learned at school has any of the power or significance of what she learned from her mother while she was alive and even after her death" (Unterhalter 1999: 56).

Unterhalter (1999) ends the article by posing the question if schooling entails empowerment for these women. She concludes with that for the older generation women, who all had "mother-figures" present during their schooling replacing the loss of their own mothers, schooling was an empowering situation. Unterhalter (1999) draws this conclusion from the women's autobiographies about their own family and children, which reflect the work of their "substitute mothers". For the younger generation of women, on the other hand, their writings do not convey the message of empowerment through schooling. Their education was unfortunately influenced by the negative gender attitudes of the time, which overshadowed the positive effect of schooling and the meaningful relationships which came into existence for the older generation. "In contrast to the older women's texts, in which schooling is seen to be catalytic to empowerment, the younger generation of women portray it as irrelevant" (Unterhalter 1999:62).

Does a good, safe and trusting teacher and learner relationship contribute to making education an empowering situation? I believe that good teacher learner relationship is one of the ingredients that need to be present for education to be a tool of empowerment. However, as the autobiographies written by the second group of women suggests such relationships might be difficult to create and experience if the circumstances in your surroundings hinder the development of such a relationship. I will return to discuss this matter in more depth later

in this thesis. Now I will turn to the presenting South Africa, where the research for this study took place.

2.3 South Africa as the stage

South Africa is a country with a population of approximately 49 million people (CIA 2009). The country is divided into nine provinces: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Northern Cape, Free State, North West, Gauteng, Mpumlanga, and Limpopo (Republic of South Africa 2009).

South Africa is a unique country in many ways; politically, economically and socially. As I will mention further in chapter four, choosing South Africa as the stage for this thesis gives me the characteristics that I intentionally was seeking to investigate in attempting to answer the thesis question, namely underprivileged, young girls. The South African context made the sample a purposeful sample. The main characteristics of the participants in this study are female and black. I will return to the issue of purposeful sampling in the methodology chapter.

The global community has played a relevant and important role in the liberation movement that took place in South Africa in the early 1990's. The international community took distance from South Africa when it was under the apartheid regime. Through economic and social boycotts the international community marked their distance towards the country on the basis of how South Africa so visibly went against many basic human rights. One might say that the Western world played a role in the liberation movement towards democracy in South Africa, because of its negative attitudes towards the apartheid government regimes actions and support towards the opposition. However, it was South Africans alone, who won the battle against the apartheid regime.

Africa as a whole continent struggles with economic, political and social development, due to several factors. Today South Africa is one of the most successful countries on the continent on many levels, with a rapid economic growth. According to the 2009 EFA Monitoring Report, the GNP per capita in US \$ has risen from 3280 in 1998 to 5390 in 2006. However, the report also shows the large gap between rich and poor. It shows that the poorest 20% of the population only earn 4% of the total income, compared to the richest 20%

who earn 62 % of the county's income (UNESCO 2009b). The legacy of apartheid has left the country with social scars, in the shape of inequalities, large pools of differences between rich and poor, white and black, that will take decades or maybe even generations to overcome.

Furthermore, in the post-apartheid period vigorous economic growth has enabled a dramatic decline in income poverty and greater integration with the rest of the world can be seen as one cause for this performance over the past fifteen years. However, in the same time frame a decline in income poverty, income inequality has increased drastically across race, gender and location (World Bank 2009). According to Keswell (2004) South Africa has among the highest level of income inequality in the world and this inequality is strongly linked to race.

The high levels of difference in income within the poor and affluent areas of the country are very visible. One aspect worth mentioning in relation to the affects of the extreme differences between the rich and the poor is the high crime rate, which might be caused by the differences in socio-economic status (SES). The Department of Safety and Security (DOSS 2007) puts it this way in their report on The Violent Nature of Crime in South Africa:

Despite the political transition, Black South Africans have been structurally disadvantaged by apartheid. While there are mechanisms for ensuring redress, such as employment equity, many people are still afflicted by an uncertainty about whether they are able to survive and prosper if they conduct themselves according to standards of legality. The availability of stolen goods is one way of "making do" in this environment of uncertainty. As a result, people develop reciprocal relationships with those involved in crime. This detracts from the willingness to take steps against criminals and undermines the moral basis for condemning them (DOSS 2007:163).

The country has a 22.9% unemployment rate (2008 estimate) (CIA 2009) and unfortunately one might draw a link between the poverty, the high crime rate and the high unemployment rates.

Moreover, according United Nations Development Report (UNDP), which each year since 1990 has published the human development index (HDI), South Africa's HDI is 0.683, which gives the country a rank of 129th out of 182 countries with data (UNDP 2009). Namibia is ranked 128th. Education is measured by the adult illiteracy rate, and South Africa ranks 80th out of the 131 countries calculated (UNDP 2009).

The reasons why I think the context of South Africa is relevant for my overriding theme of education as a tool of empowerment, are stated above. Furthermore, I believe that the democratization that took place in the country, when the African National Congress (ANC) became the first Democratic Party, was in many ways an example of empowerment on a larger scale. For democracy to function, democracy meaning giving power to the people, perhaps the biggest prerequisite is education for all citizens in the country. The ANC together with the mass population of South Africa, along with the outside pressure from the world community were able to fight against apartheid and abolish the institutionalized segregation that had taken place for too long. The ANC is still the leading political party in South Africa today. In April 2009, the country held its fourth democratic government elections since 1994 and the ANC won the election obtaining a 65.9% majority (World Bank 2009).

Another key aspect which cannot be left out when briefly presenting South Africa as the stage for this thesis, is the flourishing HIV/Aids problem. According to UNAIDS (2008) South Africa has one of the most severe cases of the HIV/Aids epidemic in the world with approximately 5.7 million people thought to be living with the virus or disease. Approximately 3.2 million are women and 280,000 children (ages 0-14) (UNAIDS 2008). Many initiatives have been implemented to fight the epidemic. An example of this is the five year Strategic HIV/Aids STD plan, developed by the government. The plan was based on recent evidence that "...suggest that of all people living with HIV in the world, 6 out of every 10 men, 8 out of every 10 women, and 9 out of every 10 children are in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Republic of South Africa 2000:7). The plan was in action from 2000-2005 and aimed at increasing awareness around the disease; how it spread; how to prevent spreading; and the issue of stigmatization. The target group for the plan was the country's youth, however, increasing the awareness at all levels, including involvement at the political level is necessary in the battle against the disease (Republic of South Africa 2000). One of the channels through increasing awareness for the youth is through education, which I will turn the attention through shortly.

In the following sections I will shed light on the state of education during apartheid and after its abolishment. One must look into the past to understand the contemporary educational situation of today.

2.3.1 Education during apartheid

During apartheid education was used as means of oppression, targeting the majority of the population, in particular black South Africans. Education was used to keep the ‘whites’ superior to the ‘blacks’ and other ethnic groups, to divide and rank the countries citizens according to race. This social engineering via race and language occurred in the public education sector, with the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1954, which sought to prescribe differential access to education based on race (Keswell, 2004). *Bantu Education* was a term that came into use in the 1950’s and it became associated with education for the black population during apartheid (Holmarsdottir 2005). One aspect of the Bantu Education was that it emphasized the concept of “racial purity”, which in particular contributed to keeping the black education inferior. The then minister of native affairs, Henrik Verwoerd, said:

The formulation of the principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken under consideration (H.F. Verwoerd cited in Holmarsdottir, 2005:50).

According to Brock-Utne, Freire’s (1972) “...banking concept of education has been emphasized in virtually all black South African schools...” (Brock-Utne 2006:260). The teaching strategies used are what Freire (1972) referred to as the “banking concept” of education, where students were passive and receptive; there was no room for critical thinking of any kind. Melanie Walker (1993), a researcher at the University of Western Cape, describes the educational system of apartheid in these words: “...apartheid education’s decades-old legacy of systematic financial starvation of African schools, of deliberately stifling the intellectual development of generations of young people, of brutal state repression and widespread student resistance” (Walker 1993:96).

The Bantu Education Act gave the minister of national education authority to decide general guidelines for the curriculum, examinations etc., but the implementation process lay in the hands of several departments and offices, resulting in a confusing range of educational authorities (Byrnes 1996). According to Byrnes (1996) there were large discrepancies in education among racial groups. She uses the teacher: learner ratio as an example. In white schools, there was an average of 18 learners per one teacher, in Asian schools there was an

average of 24 learners to one teacher, in colored schools average of 27 learners to one teacher and in black schools there was an average of 39 learners to one teacher. Moreover, she states that whereas 96 percent of all teachers in white schools had teaching certificates only 15 percent of teachers in black schools were certified (Byrnes 1996).

However, and at the same time, schools and other institutions of learning became arenas for the liberation movement that followed. Deegan (2001 cited in Hanssen 2003:67) writes about how in the spirit of black consciousness, the South African Student's Organization was formed in 1969. Black learners stood up for their rights, and on June 16th 1976 students marched in Soweto in protest against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as the language in school. Many children died during the riot when police opened fire into the crowds. The consequences of the Soweto riot were many; workers across the country went on strike, several school buildings were burnt to the ground and there was general uprising in the townships across the country (Hanssen 2003). In 1994, June 16th was declared a public holiday, Youth Day, in memory of all the young learners who fought for their cause.

After the abolishment of the apartheid regime in 1994, the government was replaced by the former liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC). The new government was eager to change the country and the education sector had high priority. As education was a cornerstone for injustice and segregation during apartheid, education could be a tool of empowerment and equal rights for the people of the new South Africa.

One issue which is relevant about the new government, concerning one aspect of this thesis, which I will return to later, is the use of language of instruction. In what language one receives instruction might affect the quality of education, in a way that the learners do not understand and therefore might not be able to internalize the content and use it in a larger context, neither in a personal or collective matter. When the ANC came to power, which was the most powerful symbolic centre in the anti-apartheid struggle, they chose to use English as their working language (Sonntag 2003; Biseth 2005:9). English became perhaps therefore a symbol of gaining access to an international playing field, combined with a high status. The view of English as a "power language", and the "ticket out" of poverty is visible in the schools I visited during the fieldwork, both from teachers and girls. I will return to this issue in greater depth in chapter five when I present the findings.

During apartheid black girls and women were victims not only due to race, but also due to their gender and their social class (Holmarsdottir 2008a). According to Unterhalter (1999) even though statistics show a large expansion in the enrolment of women in school during apartheid, these features of the education system were only superficial, in the sense that education or not, women would still be victims of discrimination. “Women continue to experience discrimination in personal, private and public spheres, as well as high levels of violence and low levels of self-confidence” (Lessing 1994 cited in Unterhalter 1999:51). Following the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, several initiatives and laws has come into play to secure women’s rights in South Africa. In the next section I will mention some of these initiatives and present a look at how education is in South Africa today, especially for girls.

2.3.2 Education in South Africa today

The school system in South Africa is decentralized, a trend which is closely related to democratic thinking. According to Carrim (2001 cited in Biseth 2005:4) the decentralization of education in South Africa is based on the assumptions of increased representative and participatory democracy. The national Department of Education is in charge of education across to the nation as a whole, while each of the nine provinces has its own educational department. The central government provides a national framework for school policy while administrative responsibility lies with the provinces (Anonyms author South Africa info 2006). Some decisions on educational content are also left up to the individual school board (DoE 1996a) and the parents of the learners (DoE 1996b).

After the abolishment of apartheid a lot of progress has been made to secure educational rights for all children across race and gender (UNICEF 2009a). For example, the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 committed the government to investigating developing gender equity strategies in education (DoE 1995). Furthermore a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) was appointed in 1996 to, among other things, increase gender sensitive educational policy documents (Unterhalter 1999).

According to the GMR (UNESCO 2009a) , South Africa has achieved numeric gender equality in school, in other words giving access to education to both girls and boys equally. However, as Unterhalter (1999) states, all the initiatives implemented rest on the assumption

that access to education is the key to social and economic well-being of all girls and women. However, as discussed earlier, “access” is a word that might have different meanings and access in the sense that one is allowed to attend school is not equivalent to access in the sense that one is provided with meaningful knowledge and personal growth. This achievement is very noteworthy and numeric counts of gender equality are helpful in a quantitative and statistical manner, but statistics alone cannot tell us about the quality of the education or about the learner’s cognitive and psychological (social) growth of skills. As the numbers and statistics do not exactly show the real picture, it is necessary to look inside the “black box” (Murphy-Graham 2008), to gather more information. Commissioned by the Presidency of South Africa, UNICEF conducted a situation analysis of children in South Africa. The study was conducted between September 2007 and December 2008 and the results were published in April 2009. I will in the following section point out some of the key findings of this report in the area of education.

2.3.3 Quality in South African education

The main findings of the report on the education section conducted by UNICEF in 2007-2008, confirm the GMR (UNESCO 2009a), that girls and boys have equal access to school, which is one of the largest educational achievements for the post-apartheid system. Programmes such as No-Fee schools, and National School Nutrition Programmes have increased school participation of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The No-Fee schools program was implemented in some provinces in 2006 and extended nationally in 2007 and abolishes school fees in the poorest 40% of primary schools nationally. The National School Nutrition Programme is in collaboration with the South Africa’s Integrated Food Security Strategy and aims to provide the poorest children with at least one meal a day, based on the notion that children who are hungry cannot concentrate at school (UNICEF 2009a). Although more children have access to school, which is a tremendous achievement, the report, however, indicates that the achievement of school outcomes do not necessarily coincide with access to schooling. “Where children are attending school but not achieving the expected level for their grade, they cannot be said to have meaningful access to education” (UNICEF 2009a:90).

Quality of education is not only measured by educational outcomes but also by teacher-learner ratio, which according to the report is approximately 40:1, average across the country (UNICEF 2009a). However, it states that the number of learners to one teacher may be higher in the rural areas of the country, which may affect the quality of the education. “Large class sizes, and consequent overcrowding, in the early years of schooling are a serious impediment to the realization of children’s right to basic education” (UNICEF 2009a:92). The situation in the two schools I visited during the fieldwork had overcrowded classrooms with a teacher- learner ratio at approximately 55:1. I will return to this in chapter five. Furthermore, an aspect of quality education is viewed through the resources and the teaching materials which are available for teachers. The report specifically mentions an unsatisfactory amount of reading material and library books, in which 79.3 % of the schools in the country do not have library facilities at all (UNICEF 2009a). The lack of adequate library facilities at the schools I visited will also be discussed in chapter five.

Moreover, the physical conditions of the school and the safety of the children at school are aspects of the report which concerns the quality of education. The data which the report is built on shows that large improvements have been made to the school facilities over the last decade, however, it shows that there are many things that “...still need to be done before all South African children will be able to attend schools that meet the minimum standards for a safe, healthy and supportive learning environment” (UNICEF 2009a:96). Schools in South Africa, at their best is a place where children are able to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually, through instruction, examples of others and own practice. However, this is not the case for all the schools in South Africa. Girls are especially victims of bad experiences at school, such as rape and beatings from male learners and male teachers. According to Human Rights Watch (2001) schools are viewed as violent places for girls, especially in the form of sexual violence.

The report does not mention the issue of language as an aspect of what entails as quality education. However, it states that

“...those children with low scores who were not learning in their own language also tended to live in poor communities in remote areas. Socio-economic conditions and the language of teaching and learning, as well as the quality of teaching, are all contributory factors to low learning achievements” (UNICEF 2009a:90).

The issue of language of instruction and its impact on learning and educational achievement will be further investigated throughout this thesis.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the conceptual framework, shedding light on the complex and multi-dimensional concept of empowerment, aiming to give the reader an understanding of my operationalization of the concept.

I have emphasised the importance of focusing on education for girls, supporting the intention behind this study. I have also presented a limited glance of educational history in South Africa and looked at some indicators of the contemporary educational situation in the country.

The following chapter is the theoretical framework which together with this contextual background chapter will provide the basis for the following presentation of the main findings presented in chapter five and the discussion of these findings in chapter six.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework which this study rests on. The first section of the chapter will contain Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecological System theory* (EST) which lay the foundation for this theoretical framework. The assumption that a child's development and in turn his/her educational development which might lead to empowerment is affected by his/her home environment. How a person perceives their present actions and behaviors in terms of what these actions will bring with them in the future affects present behavior. A presentation of a *Future Time Perspective theory* (FTP) and its effects on motivation will follow. Factors that affect a child's educational outcome will be illuminated in the third section of the chapter. I will give the reader an insight into the fundamental idea behind this theoretical framework, namely that every aspect of a child's life is intertwined and in answering the main research question: "Is education a tool of empowerment?", one needs to investigate it from several angles, with the notion that both home and school variables are necessary for education to be a tool for empowerment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST will now be presented.

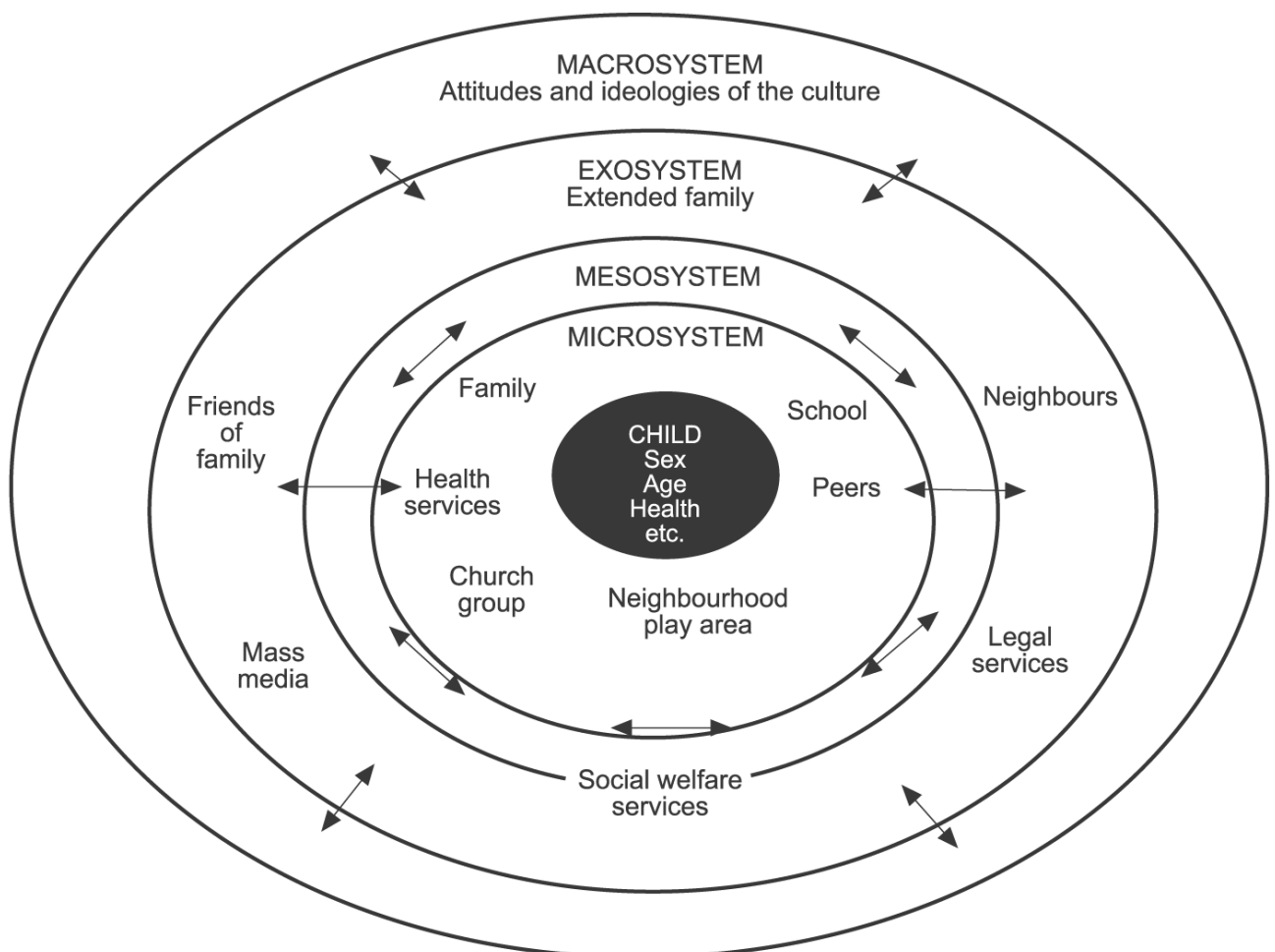
3.1 Ecological System Theory

Bronfenbrenner is known to be one of the most influential development psychologists of the last century (Klefbeck and Ogden 2005). He believes that the most efficient way to study children's development is to study them in their natural environments, for instance their homes, in their classrooms and on the playground (Lerner 2005). His theory includes four layered systems, each containing separate, but dependent social aspects of a child's development spiral, which will be reviewed in the following section. Due to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) contribution to development theory, one is now able to study, children and their environment, including the family, the school, the society, the economy and politics, all in one.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) does not see human beings as passive, but rather as active participants who grow as a dynamic entity continuously evolving and restructuring depending on their surroundings and settings. He believes that individuals influence the

environment and conversely the environment influences the individuals. The ‘relationship’ is two-directional, characterized by reciprocity. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that the environment, as relevant to the development process, is not limited to a single setting, but rather extended to interconnections between several settings deriving from the larger surroundings. “The ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures each contained within the next” (Bronfenbrenner 1979:22). To visualize these concentric circles, he uses the Russian wooden “babuskadolls” each of different size that all fit into the next, as an example of the different systems (Klefbeck & Ogden 2005). The structures Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to are micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, and will be examined below.

Figure 1: Model of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System



Source: Dockrell and Messer (1999, p. 139)

3.1.1 Microsystem

“A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner 1979:22). The word experienced in this definition, Bronfenbrenner (1979), emphasizes is the objective reality which the developing individual perceives, those aspects that give meaning to a person in a given situation. Examples of environments which the children have direct physical contact with inside the microsystem are the child’s family/home situation, classroom situation and other primary-environments such as a church group or a dance group.

Many of Bronfenbrenner’s ideas concerning his theory of ecological systems originate from the work of Kurt Lewin, especially his construct of “life space” or psychological field” (Lewin 1935 in Bronfenbrenner 1979:23). Lewin (1935) captured two aspects which Bronfenbrenner (1979) transferred into his concept of microsystem. First off is the fact that it is an activity which a person sees himself or others as engaging and meaningful. The microsystem is a social and cultural organized environment where individuals contribute to the organization and defining meaning. Children engage actively to give the setting meaning. Watching what others do and ascribing meaning to their actions contributes to give the setting meaning even further for the individual. With this process children develop cognitive ‘maps’ which they can relate to and which in addition shape them (Klefbeck & Ogden 2005).

The second aspect transferred from Lewin (1935) involves the child perceiving an interconnection between the people in the setting. It is the relations that tie people together in social systems. Within microsystems there can arise multiple relationships, between two or more people. For most children their first dyadic (between two people) and triadic (between three people) interaction happens in the home. A link between two people is not only affected by their connection, but is also affected by the link one or both of them have with a third party. For example, a relationship between a mother and a child may be affected by the missing connection between the child’s mother and father. However, Garbarino (1985) states that of the most important aspect of the microsystem as a force of development is the existence of relationships that go beyond the simple dyadic and triadic relationship within the home. The first microsystems children are involved in are quite small and dyadic or triadic in relatively simple activities as feeding and bathing. However as children get older the

complexity of these interactions increase when children does more with more people, and the dyadic and triadic relationships expand to include more people. According to Garbarino (1985) development enhances when children are able to observe and be part of other dyads and triads. In addition a child's development is enhanced by observing differences in how the people in the dyad behaves when a third party is present. For instance one way we learn love is by observing parents who love each other.

Families are recognized as the primary care giving context for young children and as an important mediator of developmental outcomes (Shonkoff 2009). The conditions of the parent-child relationship play a vital role in a child's development. According to Shonkoff (2009) children may be at risk when their primary caregivers experience difficulties such as substance abuse. The child and the caregiver influence each other. A child's intrinsic temper may affect how the parent acts towards the child, as well as the parent's behaviors affect the child's behavior. A caregivers' behavior may be affected several factors, such as immaturity, low educational attainment, mental problems such as depression caused by substance abuse, family violence or economic stress. Rutter (1975) states that parents and primary caregivers' behavior in a child's early years is a determent of how the child will develop emotionally and socially. The stress that caregivers living in poverty may experience might weaken their ability to develop empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness to their children, which in turn can lead to diminished learning opportunities and poorer developmental outcomes for the children, according to Shonkoff (2009).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) continues to state that in addition to the issue of perceiving meaningful activities and perceiving relations is also the notion of 'role', essential within each microsystem. The roles that take form in a microsystem change with time and place. In a home situation the child is a son or a daughter, while in a classroom situation, the same individual is a learner. It is important for a child's development that there exists a positive relationship between the individual's different roles, with this the child will know the norms of both the home and classroom environment, without internal conflict arising (Klefbeck & Ogden 2005).

Risks and Opportunities within the Microsystem

Garbarino (1985) has analyzed the microsystem in relation to which risks and developmental opportunities it may represent. He emphasized that at any given development stage it is crucial that a balanced correlation is present between the children's needs and interest and the remaining people in the interconnection. Garbarino (1985) does not say how many close people it is necessary for the child to be able to relate to for optimal development, but emphasizes the necessity to understand that a child's development is dependent on a growing contact net. "The 'product' of a healthy microsystem is an adolescent whose capacity for understanding and successfully dealing with ever-wider spheres of reality increases. Such a person learns to have self-respect and self-confidence, to be socially and intellectually competent" (Garbarino 1985:53).

Furthermore, social systems consisting of dyads, triads and larger groups strive to be in balance. The balance describes how the systems attend to the different individuals' needs and interest in the system. When the system lacks balance a risk situation may appear. Situations that might contribute to such unbalance can be of both external and internal development changes (Klefbeck and Ogden 2005). An example of such an external change is a change in the relationship between the mother and the father, a divorce or a fight, that again has rippling effects on the child, creating a change in the balance of their relationship. In a perfect balanced system, which is seen as an optimal development environment for the child, certain criteria must be present, such as emotional confirmation and intellectual stimulation according to Garbarino (1985). Children who one-sidedly adapt to their parent's expectations and demands have a greater chance of experiencing retracement in their development. A risk appears when the balance is in the child's disfavor and that might happen if the interaction between the parent's and child is filled with violence, threats or misuse of the child's guilt feelings (Garbarino 1985).

Garbarino (1985) states, however, that the most serious risk factor in a microsystem is rejection. When the child feels that he or she is not wanted. Rejection of any kind, but especially from parents has negative effects on the child's development. Anthropologist Rohner (1975) concludes that across cultures rejection is a kind of emotional malignancy that eats away at the individual's capacity for self-esteem, social competence and hope (Rohner in: Garbarino 1985:56).

The microsystem is the only system in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST that has a physical limit in time and space. A classroom is a perfect example of this. The other systems are so-called latent environment structures and which cannot be limited to a specific time or space.

The connection between two or more microsystems is what Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to as a mesosystem, which will be discussed next.

3.1.2 Mesosystem

“A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life)” (Bronfenbrenner 1979:25). A mesosystem thus links microsystems together. For a child of school going age, a common mesosystem would be the connection between home, school and activities, such as a church group or a dance class. The mesosystem is formed whenever the developing person moves into a new setting.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes the importance that lies behind the transitions between the systems (e.g. home and school). He refers to this transition as an ‘ecological transition’, and involves two critical points which are essential for the outcome, namely *how* the transition happens and *who* is involved in the transition (Bronfenbrenner 1979). For instance, if parents, peers and the child are eager and excited to start school, the transition will most likely be a success. In such a positive case, the sum of the whole (mesosystem) will be greater than its parts (microsystems) (Garbarino 1985). The mesosystem has a key function in a child’s adolescence and the quality in this system determines development opportunities or risks (Klefbeck & Ogden 2005).

Risks and opportunities within the mesosystem

One factor that might hinder social and intellectual development for the child concerns the point of shared or conflicted values between the existing microsystems, for example, the home and the school. Garbarino (1985) claims that the youth will be at risk if the microsystems work in opposition to each other or work in isolation of each other. When parents are involved in what goes on in their child’s school, when they attend parent-teacher

conferences and play an active part in their child's education, it will according to Klefbeck and Ogden (2005) have a positive impact on the child's development. The good connection between the microsystems will most likely create a harmony of expectations and a set of boundaries which the child can relate to. If this positive link is missing it might be damaging for the child stuck in the middle. The school-home mesosystem is one of the most important in an adolescent life (Garbarino 1985).

Berk (2009) also emphasizes the importance of a good connection between the home and the school. She states that a child's academic progress does not only depend on what goes on inside the classroom, it is also promoted by the parents' involvement in the child's school life. How the academic learning is carried out inside the home is also a contributing factor to a child's development within the mesosystem. A risk situation may appear if the child for instance does not receive help or at least encouragement to do her homework for instance.

3.1.3 Exosystem

"An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:25). Examples of exosystems can be the parent's workplace, school boards and church elders. What happens in these environments, either in a positive or negative direction affects the developing person's life. How the exosystem affect children's life depends on how well the child's needs and interests are considered and looked after (Klefbeck & Ogden 2005).

Risks and Opportunities within the Exosystem

According to Garbarino (1985) risks and opportunities come about in two ways in the exosystem. The first one takes form when parents are treated in a way that either enhances or impoverishes their behavior inside the microsystem. For example, if one of the parents gets let go from their place of work, the child would be directly affected by their change in behavior and its rippling affects in terms of financial limitations for instance. When the loss of salary means less food and clothes it directly has an impact on the child. Or if a parent, due to their work situation becomes more and more absent from the child's life, it will have rippling affects on their childrearing style (Garbarino 1985).

The family is viewed as a social system, where family members not only influence each other, but are also influenced by their surroundings e.g. community, neighborhood (Berk 2009). A child's development and its outcomes are influenced by a complex web of conditions. There exists a strong correlation between a child's social and cognitive development and the family's (SES), according to Shonkoff (2009). Specifically children from low income families are in a risk situation for poorer outcomes, including academic achievement. Berk (2009) claims that the constant stress factors that families with low income experience, may weaken the family system, especially in the single-parent household and in the families that live in poor housing and dangerous neighborhoods. Stress factors that arise from worrying about financial difficulties may contribute to reduction or stagnation in child development.

The second way risk and opportunity come about in the exosystem is when decisions made in those settings affect the child's day-to-day life. Examples of this are, for instance, when the school board or a local organization withdraws extra curriculum activities that the child cherishes and views as positive in their life. Garbarino (1985) states the importance that youth have advocates in the school board or the local organizations have so their 'voices' are heard. Otherwise, a risk opportunity might easily occur. Feeling that one has no power over what happens in one's own life is, according to Albee (1980), *the* primary factor leading to impaired development and mental illness.

Berk (2009) describes a third risk/opportunity situation that may appear in relations to the exosystem. Since the exosystem extends outside the primary family relations, good support systems around the child may come from neighbors and extended family, in the form of social and or economic support. For example an aunt or a teacher.

3.1.4 Macrosystem

"The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:26). Examples of macrosystems are political, economic and religious systems. They can be defined as wide ideological and institutional patterns which can be compared across cultures (Klefbeck and Ogden 2005). Macrosystems refers to the general

organization of the world as it is and as it might be, according to Garbarino (1985).

Garbarino (1985) points to religion as a perfect example of the macrosystem concept because it involves both a definition, both a theology and a set of roles, rules, buildings and programs.

The macrosystem is seen as carrier of cultural and value systems containing information and ideologies, some of these values and ideologies sometimes exist at the expense of others. A culture can for instance be individualistic in preference to collectivistic, motivating competition instead of cooperation, and boost winners on behalf of the losers in academic and work related contexts (Klefbeck and Ogden 2005). In a study that Bronfenbrenner (1973) conducted on children in the United States and the former Soviet Union on the topic of child raising, it became clear that values in upbringing and education reflect the values and norms in the society at large. Changes in the macrosystem can happen through changes in political systems or when wars and revolutions start or end (Klefbeck and Ogden 2005:58).

Risks and Oppurtunitites within the Macrosystem

When it comes to the macrosystem, risk is an ideology or cultural alignment that threatens to impoverish on microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems interrelating that develop individuals, according to Garbarino (1985). One such risk is visible “...in a pattern of racist and sexist values that demeans minority groups and thus threaten the development of self-esteem versus a pluralistic ideology that welcomes diversity and increases self-worth” (Garbarino 1985:61). The risk becomes evident when the patterns formed by society is the cause of lacking ability and willingness for adults to care for their children and when the children are not able to learn from the adults. Opportunities on the other hand promises to enrich the children/adolescents development by enhancing other ecological systems (Garbarino 1985).

In a later stage Bronfenbrenner (2005) added a fifth element to his system, which is called the chronosystem and encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child’s environments. The chronosystem involves the changes of life events that affect the child and that may also be a big determiner in a child’s future achievements. This system involves how environmental events and socio-historical circumstances affect the child’s development. Berk (2009) adds that such changes in life events may also come from within the child,

“...since as children grow older they select, modify and create many of their own settings and experiences” (Berk 2009:29).

Bronfenbrenner’s EST has, from the 1970’s to today, evolved to provide fuller and more powerful understandings of the importance of the dynamic and multilayered ecology of human development (Lerner 2005). The next section of this theoretical framework also centers on human development, more specifically, educational development and in how one perceives present action.

The idea that socio-historical events and that the specific period of time a child grows up in affects his/her future development, although not entirely similar, can however be linked to the theory of future motivation. If a child grows up under difficult and challenging social circumstances this may motivate the child to do whatever he/she can to change the life situation that he/she may be in and hope to achieve higher and climb society’s social ladder. I will in the following section present a theoretical framework of future motivation theory.

3.2 Theory of future time perspective

What affects our behavior? Why do we do the things we do? Is our behavior, our actions targeted/goal oriented? These existential questions are difficult to answer and different theories may serve as equally valid explanations. The theory of Future Time Perspective (FTP) that will be presented below is part of a larger theory of time perspective, including both past and future time, which will be presented briefly. However, this theoretical review will mainly have a focus on the future, more precisely on how the thought of the future impacts present behavior. In other words, how a person perceives and anticipates their future may determine or be partly involved in the reason behind the person’s present action.

Psychologists studying time stress the fact that not only the present state of affairs, but also the past and the future events in the frame of a person’s time perspective co-determine behavior (Nuttin 1985). Nuttin (1985) defines the concept by using two points of view. On the one hand you find the subjective view of the individual and the arrangement of objects on the other hand. In other words, an individual’s time perspective is conceived of subjective chronological localized objects.

The concept of time perspective has slowly grown in the field of behavioral science. Although the concept of the future was introduced in general psychology by Tolman (1932 cited in Nuttin 1985:13), through the notion of expectancy, the role of the future was not generally accepted by behavioral science (Nuttin 1985). In the field of scientific methodology it is not accepted that not yet existing events are already active, in the sense that the future may determine present behavior. Nevertheless, those in behavioral science who do accept the future time perspective as a behavioral determinant often consider it as an affect of the past. Fraisse (1963) stated the following “due to memory, we are able to reconstruct the succession of previously experienced changes, and to anticipate such changes in the future” (Fraisse 1963 cited in Nuttin 1985:14).

Time perspective consists of (the creation of) “mental perceptions”, cognitive representation of a sequence of events. For the mentally represented objects to be developed/ constructed a certain level of cognitive knowledge must be in place. “In the frame of time perspective, future and past events have an impact on present behavior to the extent that they are actually present on the cognitive level of behavioral functioning” (Nuttin 1985:12-13). To what extent one recognizes and acknowledges the role of the cognitive process in behavioral functioning is how one acknowledges the effect of time perspective in behavior. Nuttin (1985) concludes, “Only past and future events that form the content of actual cognitive functioning are psychologically present as belonging to the past or to the future; as such they constitute an individual’s time perspective and may influence present behavior” (Nuttin 1985:13). Thus, cognitive processes are of essential importance in constructing time perspective.

3.2.1 Understanding of time

“In defining time perspective we referred to objects that are present on the level of mental representation” (Nuttin 1985:26). In past time perspective these objects spring from the field of memory, while in FTP these objects are based on short- and long term goals together with means-end structure. For the distant goal object to have an impact on present behavior, the human capacity to span time to an almost unlimited degree is vital. Furthermore the human ability to look ahead in time is critical for recognizing the connection between an action and its outcomes when a longer time interval separates the two. However, a negative aspect of

this mental representation is the fact that the realism of the imagined events might decrease as the distance in time increases (Nuttin 1985).

The role of expectancy of outcomes in regulating motivation depends on the goals set and the means available to reach this goal. Perceived instrumentality is the sense that one believes that one's own actions lead to the goal(s) set. In FTP it is not the goal itself, for instance the career that activates behavior, but the anticipation of it that 'causes' behavior. Since the future is yet to happen goals only exist on the mental and cognitive level, therefore the only way to bring the goal to a psychological existence is to anticipate it. According to Nuttin (1985) only the anticipated and psychological perceived goal can put forth a motivating effect.

Human capability is important to create cognitive representations of sequences of events and understanding the temporal and spatial distance between these events which is linked to the aspect of realism of time perspective. The degree of realism of the objects involved in an active time perspective is an important variable, which affects the present behavior. Nuttin (1985) also refers to this degree of realism as *temporal integration*. Goal objects that are further away in time may have lower reality value and less behavioral impact. Furthermore, the aspect of realism in FTP is if the end-goal actually is realistically obtainable for the individual. Thus objects beyond an individual's normal time horizon appears less real. However, Nuttin (1985) hypothesizes that when a person sets him/herself a long distance goal and start working towards it, a casual relationship between the goal and the present activity is established, followed by an increase in the degree of reality, the temporal integration.

3.2.2 Empirical evidence of Future Time Perspective research

Across countries and cultures, schooling and education is not an end in itself. It is a future oriented investment. Andriessen, Lens and Phaet (2004) examined the impact of future goals on motivation and learning in multicultural classrooms. In short, their research focused on first or second generation minority children living in Western countries and how these children became motivated to achieve a high level of academic excellence on the basis of a future oriented motivational theory. Andriessen and colleagues (2004) believe that how one view the future enhances the motivation to do well in school for "minority" learners.

Although the girls investigated in this study are not minorities in their own country, as first or second generation immigrants, they have a set of common traits with “minority” children living in the West, in Andriessen and colleagues’ (2004) study. Following I will briefly describe the findings of Andriessen and colleagues’ (2004) research as it links well with my own study.

The minority children investigated in Andriessen and colleagues’ (2004) research have very high hopes and big dreams for the future, including what profession they would have and what benefits this job/career would bring in terms of money, security and stability. It is argued that the future is both highly relevant and of prime importance for school achievement (Andriessen et. al.2004). “...students who believe that doing well in school is instrumental for their future careers are more successful in school” (Andriessen et. al.2004:64).

Minority parents characteristically perceive educational investment in their children as a primary means to improve the family’s living standard and socioeconomic status. These youth often perceive educational progress as a family obligation and as an effective way to achieve a better future (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995 cited in Andriessen et al. 2004:62).

Motivational research on future time perspective and goal theory will succeed “on” minority children if the school and family foster internal regulation along with positive perceptions of instrumentality. Studies show that parent’s encouragement counts a great deal in their children’s school achievement. According to Andriessen and colleagues’ (2004), communities that are resourceful and supporting, are more likely to encourage high academic aspirations and achievement, from a sociological point of view. In a study by Phalet and Hagendoorn (1996 cited in Andriessen et al. 2004:72), the empirical findings show that socioeconomic disadvantages were accompanied by continuous achievement in education along with an emphasis on loyalty towards the family. In the following section I will continue investigating the social surroundings which affect a child’s development, which I believe in turn, influence the child’s educational achievement and experience and with it lay the foundation to enable me to answer the question if education can be used as a tool of empowerment.

Both home and school environments affect a child's development (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Evans and Kantrowitz (2001) investigated how socio-economic status correlate with optimal environmental conditions. They stated that the quality of the home environment is linked to children's cognitive development. Additionally it is stated that structure and the predictability in family routines impacts children's development (Fiese & Kline 1993).

In light of the FTP discussed above and the main objective of this study, I will pose the following question: Does the visions and perceptions of the girls' future, contribute to and motivate them to make the most out of their education in present time, as I did for the minority children in the study by, Andriessen and colleagues' (2004)? And will the education they do receive in school, benefit them personally and in life generally? I will answer this question in the discussion chapter. The next section will contain aspects that influence a child's educational outcome. I have chosen three main points to illustrate "quality education", as defined by UNICEF (2002), which I will now discuss.

3.3 "Quality Education"

In a report on quality education for all, focusing on girl's education (UNICEF 2002), some factors are pointed out from research during the previous decade, since the EFA declaration was first signed by the international community in 1990. Quality education, according to UNICEF (2002) entails five dimensions; what the learners bring with them, environments, content, processes and outcomes. To start off with what learners bring with them, the report highlights that if children come from physically and socially safe home environments, if they are supported and encouraged by the family and environment to pursue an education the children are more likely to benefit from a quality education. The school environment is also essential to quality education. The school environment is supposed to be a safe and secure environment where children are allowed to be children and not be afraid. In addition, it is supposed to be a place where children are free to think for themselves and where they can spend the maximum amount of time learning. For the content to reflect quality education it must, according to the report (UNICEF 2002), include a relevant curriculum which reflects the society the children live in and in coherence to the national development goals. The educational content should be gender sensitive, promoting the position of women in the society, and assure the learners with adequate life skills appropriate for the context they live

in. In South Africa, a country where the spread of HIV/Aids is very high (UNAIDS 2008) such contextual content would include knowledge about among other things HIV/Aids. The processes to which quality education take place include well educated teachers, child-centered learning approaches and learning in a language that both the teachers and the learners comprehend. Furthermore, the process includes the relationship between teachers and learners. The outcomes of quality education for girls are numerous, which I have mentioned in the previous chapter, for instance enhanced individual and national development, which is the essential and key element of the empowerment process.

I draw a resemblance between “quality education” and Rogers (1969) concept “significant learning”. The following section includes some of his thoughts on learning that steams from the humanistic educational way of thinking. Rogers’ (1969) significant learning entails what he believes to be the best learning conditions for a child.

According to Rogers (1969) there are two kinds of learning, one in which the learner is passive and only receives knowledge without asking questions or thinking for him-/herself. Freire (1972) refers to this kind of learning as the ‘banking concept of education’. This kind of learning is according to Rogers (1969), meaningless for the person since it has no connection to the individual’s personal existence. On the other hand, the learning which is praised by Rogers (1969) is learning that has meaning and personal relevance for the people being taught. I will return to the issue of Freire’s (1972) ‘banking concept’ later in the study. In addition and in relevance to what content is relevant to one learner, but perhaps not another learner, is linked to the issue of intrinsic motivation. The second kind of education Rogers (1969) emphasizes is the kind that is evaluated by the learner in terms of his or her needs, a learning where the locus of evaluation is internal (Patterson 1977:301).

Rogers’ (1969) main principles for what he refers to as significant learning, entails several components. I will here present my summary of these components. First off learning takes place when the subject matter has high relevance for a learner’s personal life and also future motivation. Furthermore, learning takes can take place if the learner feels safe and where there is room for mistakes. According to Rogers (1969) learning involves the reality of trying and failing, a natural propensity which our whole life is filled with. Learning is best received by the learners when it takes place in a safe, supportive and encouraging environment, because some learners might perceive learning new material as frightening and non-

achievable. A safe environment with room for mistakes and trying over removes the fear of failure. Secondly, Rogers' view on learning rests on the learning principle offered by Dewey (1975), namely, learning by doing (Dewey 1975). According to Rogers (1969) significant learning is obtained through experience or real problems, learning acquired through doing. When real problems arise the knowledge acquired to solve these problems is meaningful and is 'stored' in a deeper sense than knowledge acquired to solve an assignment at school that the learner sees as meaningless. In addition, learners acquire learning effectively if the learners are involved in the learning process (Patterson 1977).

To shed further light on the five dimensions of quality education emphasized by UNICEF (2002) I will, in the following section focus on a few of those dimensions which are in focus in this thesis, namely factors that exist in the "process", language, teaching methods and the interrelations between learners and the teacher.

3.3.1 Language of instruction

In a multilingual country as South Africa language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is a key issue for the educational policy makers. As mentioned earlier the democratization process that took place after the abolishment of apartheid included aspects of language changes. The country went from having two official languages (English and Afrikaans) to having eleven official languages namely: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, Swati, Venda and Tsonga (Republic of South Africa 2009). According to the Constitution (RSA1996), everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the culture life of their own choice. The majority of the people living in Western Cape have Afrikaans as their mother tongue, 55.3%, while, 23.7% have Xhosa as their mother tongue and the remaining 19.3% have English as their mother tongue (RSA 2009). In the townships I visited, however, Xhosa was the common language used by both the teachers and the learners. However, the language of instruction practiced at both school A and B was English, in all subjects except for the subject of Xhosa, which was in Xhosa. The tests and the exams were all in English as well. As the findings presented later on in the thesis will show, Xhosa is the language used frequently in the classroom for explanation and during informal conversations between teachers and learners.

It is stated that the language teachers are responsible to ensure that the LOLT does not become a barrier to learning (DoE 2005a). However, as Cummins (2000) point out, learning academic content, while and at the same time learning the language of instruction (LOI) is not without difficulties. It is stated in the guidelines (DoE 2005b) that it is important that South Africa learners reach high level of proficiency in at least two languages, and that the learners should become competent in their addition language (in the case of my girls that would mean English) while their home language is maintained and developed. Additionally, the importance of the nature of language is stated as follows:

The Languages Learning Area also underlies all other Learning Areas, since language is the medium through which all teaching, learning and assessment takes place. Thus without language no other Learning Area could exist. The language teachers, together with other Learning Areas teachers have an important responsibility to ensure that languages are fully utilized across the curriculum (DoE 2005b:3).

Brock- Utne (2006) agrees with Obanya (1980) and his train of thought that the greatest learning obstacle for children in Africa is of a linguistic nature. Using a language as medium of instruction which neither the learners nor the teachers understand nor use well enough easily creates obstacles in the learning process. “All learning at the early stages is done best in the mother tongue, and this provides the best foundation for later learning in other language medium” (MBEC 1995 cited in Brock-Utne 2006:203).

Not only are there educational arguments for using the mother tongue as the LOI but also socio-cultural aspects (UNESCO 1953). Language gives people and cultures an identity. This point is related to the first dimension of “quality” mentioned in the UNICEF (2002) report in terms of the importance to recognize what the learners bring with them to the school arena. The language a child uses in his/her immediate surroundings, the language the child spoke his/her first words in, the language in which the child thinks and dreams will always be a part of their personal identity. If a child believes that their primary language(s) is (are) inferior to another, because it is not good enough to be used as the language of instruction, children may feel that they are also inferior in a way, that an essential a part of themselves is being denigrated (Brock-Utne 2006). Self-identity, self-esteem, the notion that one is happy with one self is an important aspect of empowerment. I will return to discuss this aspect in greater lengths in the discussion chapter.

Another aspect which is of relevance in the process of transferring knowledge to the learners is in which the educational content is conveyed. Due to language barriers for perhaps and in some cases both teachers and learners some methods of teaching might reflect what Freire (1972) refers to as “banking concept of education”. Freire’s (1972) criticism of traditional education had its base in his view that learners were made passive, and that teachers filled in “deposits” of information in which real learning does not take place. According to Holmarsdottir (2005) using this “banking” method many teachers promote memorization and learners repeating in chorus what the teachers say, as tools of teaching. Chick (2001) refers to this chorus-teaching as “safe-talk”. The negative consequences of safe-talk concerning the learners is that safe-talk “...creates a space where the teachers and the learners know what to expect and how to behave in class, but where a high price is paid in terms of (a lack of) learning” (Holmarsdottir 2005:336). Brock-Utne (2007) is deeply concerned with the educational practices in South Africa and Tanzania and states,

“African teachers should become more “learner-centered”, to help them activate their students and engage them in critical thinking and dialogue. Teachers are asked to abandon a teacher style where students just copy notes from the blackboard, learn their notes by heart and repeat them at tests” (Brock-Utne 2007:512).

In the following section I will draw attention to an important aspect in which a child’s social and cognitive development is influenced, the learner and the teacher relationship. As mentioned earlier, this relationship may be especially important for a child that grows up in a challenging home environment consisting of risk factors.

3.3.2 Learner-teacher relations

The interpersonal relationship between the learner and the teacher is an important aspect of Rogers (1969) educational theory. However, the question one needs to ask is: where does the role of the teacher come into play, and what really is his- her function in the classroom when, according to Rogers (1969), the ‘best’ knowledge is the one acquired by the learners own curiosity and personal needs?

I have summarized the three conditions that Rogers (1969) believes need to be present between a teacher and his/her learners for learning to be significant. The first condition entails that the relationship between the learner and the teacher must be of an open and

honest nature. He emphasized that it is important for the learner to see the true and genuine person of the teacher. The second condition set by Rogers (1969) is that the learner must be accepted for who he/she really is. If the learner perceives that the teacher takes his/her feelings and opinions seriously, a trusting relationship will hopefully develop, which in turn gives room for growth and development. The third condition Rogers (1969) sets for a positive teacher-learner relationship is that the teacher is able to put himself/herself in the position of the learner. With empathetic understanding the teacher can truly understand the needs of the learners. This is a complex matter and might be difficult to accomplish, however, Rogers (1969) states that if a teacher was able to make one nonjudgmental response, to a learners expressed feelings once each day, he/she would discover the power of such understanding.

Any relations have at least two sides, and for the teacher-learner relationship to become a 'good' relationship, the learners are responsible for their part. According to Rogers (1969) the learners must perceive the acceptance from the teacher as real and genuine. Although the intended purpose from the teacher is to make the learners feel safe and good about themselves, if this message does not come across to the learners, the whole thing is pointless. In addition, the learner must have a sense of internal motivation for the learning to become significant, which is related to Nuttin's (1985) FTP theory presented earlier. According to Rogers (1969) all people have an internal motivation for learning and this motivation is the tendency towards self-actualization. However, he continues to state that internal motivation will not be promoted within the learner if the classroom and the teacher do not make the classroom feel like a safe place.

When a facilitator creates, even to a modest degree, a classroom climate characterized by all that he can achieve of realness, prizing and empathy, when he trusts the constructive tendency of the individual and the group, then he discovers that he has inaugurated an educational revolution (Rogers 1969:115).

As mentioned earlier, can the teacher –learner relationship compensate for that of poor relations between a child and his/her primary caregivers? If a child is exposed to several risk factors within the home environment, does that mean that the child will develop in a negative direction?

According to Nordahl (2005) when a child is exposed to risk factors in his/her home environment, it is important that the school becomes a protective and safe place for the child.

If the school manages to provide quality education, including all the elements of quality education mentioned above, the school may reduce the chance of negative development for the child. Nordahl (2005) describes several factors that need to be present for school to become a protective factor for the child. First of all he mentions the need for a trusting and safe teacher-learner relationship. Caring teacher-learner relationships have an especially strong impact on the achievement and the social development of children coming from neighborhoods embossed with low SES levels, according to Berk (2009). She also mentions the need for a curriculum which is contextually correct for the individual child and the importance of a mutual relationship between the home and the school, which is what Bronfenbrenner (1979), refers to as the mesosystems.

While relations between a child and his/her primary caregivers are very important for a child's development, so is the relations between a learner and his/her teacher, especially if the child is exposed to risk factors within the home environment. Nordahl (2005) discusses the issue of resilient children. Resilient children are often referred to as “dandelion-children”⁴, children who despite troubles of physical or psychological distress in their upbringing have managed to succeed well in life, socially, emotionally and intellectually. Often when these children have been asked why and how they have managed to do so well in life, many of them relate this to positive experiences at school and in meeting with a special teacher (Helgeland 1994 cited in Nordahl 2005:108). The teachers mentioned as meaningful, were not, according to Nordahl (2005), teachers who replaced the parent role, but was an important and stabile grown up person and role model for the children. It was a teacher and a school environment that respected them, gave them the opportunity to believe in themselves and their own abilities.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter the reader has been given insight into the theoretical framework which together with the contextual framework lays the foundation for the discussion chapter later on in the thesis. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST has shown how different elements in a child's

⁴ Dandelion children, the word is the authors direct translation of the Norwegian word “løvetannbarn”.

surroundings effect his/her development and educational outcome. The FTP (Nuttin 1985) has described how a child's perception of the future is involved in his/her educational achievements, and the concept of "quality education" has been defined by UNICEF (2002). In the following chapter I will present the methodology used for this research, followed by a discussion of the main findings set in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have been presented.

4. METHODOLOGY

“Qualitative research usually emphasize words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman 2004:542). This thesis and its findings is based on a qualitative approach as the objectives of this study aim at investigating the world of girls in two township primary schools and understanding their home and school experiences, in addition to their perception of their future. The data for qualitative analysis typically comes from fieldwork, in which the researcher uses data collection methods such as, interviews, observations and document analysis (Patton 2002).

In this chapter I will discuss the research strategy and design purposely chosen to suit the research question. Furthermore I will give the reader insight into the process of conducting fieldwork in South Africa. I will also discuss the different data collection methods used for this research, followed by the challenges and limitations and trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Research strategy

Empirical social research requires a research a plan, a plan which embodies the task of the social research, which research design to be used and what data collection methods are most suitable for the research at hand (Bulmer & Warwick 1993). A plan like this is called a research strategy. Before I could make my research strategy, I needed to ask myself what it is I wanted to find out. The main objective underlining this research was to investigate if and how education could be used as a tool of empowerment for South African girls attending grade 7 in township schools in the Western Cape. Because of the questions I am asking “how –questions”, it was most logical to chose a qualitative research strategy for this study.

Qualitative research is naturalistic in the way that the researcher does not try to manipulate the context which is chosen to investigate. The only “manipulation” present in the situation is the presence of the researcher (Patton 2002). In most qualitative research the measurement instrument is the researcher. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) human-as-instrument is inclined to more human like behavior, as looking, listening, speaking and reading. They believe that humans will tend towards these human activities, as was natural for me when

starting the thesis process. Qualitative designs are also naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and people are interviewed with open-ended questions in places and conditions that are comfortable and familiar to them (Patton 2002). By attending classes and interviewing the learners in the safe havens of the school grounds, I stepped into their real-life natural setting.

As compared to quantitative and experimental research which aims to produce findings of numbers and statistics, qualitative and naturalistic research on the other hand aims at producing findings that take the form of words and descriptions. “Qualitative data capture and communicate someone else’s experience of the world in his or her own words” (Patton 2002:47). Through my fieldwork I wanted to give my participants a voice and I wanted to capture their stories.

4.2 Research design

A research design is a blue print that helps the researcher structure the research. Bryman (2004) refers to the term as a framework for the collection and analysis of data. “A choice of research design reflects the decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process” (Bryman 2004:543).

As for the research strategy, to figure out what research design to be used you must look closer at the questions that you intend on investigating. According to Robert Yin (1994), categorising your research questions into question boxes to again identifying ones research design is the first and most important step taken in a research study. By categorising the research questions implies putting your questions into the following questions boxes: how,- why,- what,- where,- how much,- etc. Once you have done this you have a clearer idea about what kind of research blue print is best suited for your research. It is not a simple task to generate good research questions. Bryman (2004) emphasizes the crucial importance that the research questions are clearly formulated. When after a closer look at your research questions you put them in the “how” and “why” question boxes you most likely will end up doing a case study research. In the words of Robert Yin (1994) “...a case study is when a how or why question is asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 1994:9).

4.2.1 Case study design

“Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied...” (Stake, 2000:453).

For my research I have chosen a case study research design because key questions in my field research are *how* questions. I investigated if education could be used as a tool of empowerment for two groups of South African girls in grade 7 attending two different township schools in the outskirts of Cape Town. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- How do the girls experience their home situation?
- How do the girls experience their school situation?
- How do the girls perceive their future?

The aim with these questions was to equip me with information making it easier and more secure to answer the main objective of the study: Is education a tool of empowerment for girls in two “township” primary schools in Cape Town? This questions attempts then to see how the answers are linked to the issue of empowerment. Now I will briefly look at some different views on what a case is, before specifically stating what the case of this study is.

Yin (1994) distinguishes between three types of cases, the critical case, the unique case and the revelatory case. However, as Bryman (2004) emphasizes, cases are not always chosen because they are extreme or very rare, but sometimes just because they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered. My cases are chosen because I believe that visiting schools and talking to the girls is a suitable context for me to conduct my investigation.

According to Stake (1995) the case is the object of interest on its own and the first obligation to a researcher who chooses a case study design is to understand this one case. In this piece of research the groups of girls whom I investigate is my case and I aim to provide an in depth view of how they experience school. Without the intention of generalizing the findings, I believe these two groups of girls will help me understand if is education is a tool of empowerment in this specific context.

According to Patton (2002) "...cases (e.g. people, groups, organizations, communities, culture, events) are selected because they are "informational rich" and illuminative, that is they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, sampling then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to the population" (Patton 2002:40).

My cases are the two groups of girls from the two schools which I visited. The girls in these groups fit the criteria factors I had set for this study, in turn making the purposeful sample a criteria sample as well. I will further discuss these criteria factors and discuss the issue of sampling in more detail.

4.3 Sample

"Perhaps nothing better captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the different logics undergird sampling approaches" (Patton 2002:230). When conducting qualitative inquiry the focus is most often on small samples (person, groups, classroom etc), making them purposeful.

The sample was chosen on background of how I thought the participants could enlighten me on the research topic. I took use of what Scheyvens and Storey (2003) call a non-representative or non-probability sample, which is a sample that can provide valuable information but cannot with any confidence be generalised to the entire population. There are four types of non-representative sampling according to these researchers: convenience sample, snowball sample, purposeful sample and quota sample (Scheyvens & Storey 2003: 43). On the basis of what criteria I had set for the participants, the sample in this study was purposeful.

In the early phases of this thesis I knew that I wanted to investigate in some way marginalised/under privileged young women growing up in 'difficult' circumstances. I wanted to see what kind of education they received and if this education empowered them in some way. The only thing that was unclear was who these young women would be and where they were from. I had at this early stage in many ways done a purposeful sample. "A purposeful sample occurs when the researcher makes a judgement on whom to include in the sample. It requires a prior assessment of the typical characteristics of a target population"

(Scheyvens & Storey 2003: 43). When it became clear that I would do my fieldwork in townships in South Africa, I knew that the criteria I had set for whom I wanted to investigate would be met. Patton (2002) distinguishes between several types of purposeful sampling. As a result of the above mentioned factors, I use what Patton (2002) refer to as homogeneous sample. Homogenous sampling entails picking a small homogeneous group, the purpose of which to describe this subgroup in depth. Furthermore, focus group interviews are based typically on homogeneous group. I will return to focus group interviews later on in this chapter.

Initially, when first planning my research I thought that I might investigate three or four schools, thinking that the more information the better. However, I ended up with only visiting two schools which, in retrospect I am pleased with. As Patton claims “the validity, meaningfulness, and the insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected...than with the sample size” (Patton 2004: 245).

4.4 Entering the field

Entering into the field for researchers involves two closely related, but separate parts, according to Patton (2002). First off are the negotiations with the gatekeepers, the people that “...who have a say over who is let in and who is not” (Durrheim & Terre Blanche 2006:312), and secondly getting in contact with people that allow you to physically gain entry to the field setting to begin collecting. One of the major gatekeepers in my research was my advisor, Halla B. Holmarsdottir, and through her I meet another major gatekeeper Dr. Vuyokazi Nomlomo, associate professor at the Education Department at the University of the Western Cape. The principals of the two schools I visited were also essential gatekeepers in my research as well as the staff. I was able to get in touch with these two schools through Dr. Nomlomo. Most gatekeepers will want information about the inquiry in ways that will permit them to assess costs and the risks that it will pose to them and to the groups they possess control over, to let a researcher into their setting and before giving access (Lincoln & Guba 1985). With school A, I talked to the principal over the phone, and with school B, I had

a sit down meeting with the principal and the grade seven staff, before they agreed that it was alright for them to have me at their school.⁵

School A had some experience with both foreign and local researchers visiting their school, so they in some ways knew what they were expecting, and arranging time and place for interviews when that time came was not at all problematic. School B did not have a lot of experience with researcher visiting them, apart from a Swedish-friendship school that had visited them the previous year, and I felt that they were not always so at ease with my presence. Day two of observations for instance I had to wait outside in the courtyard for 15 minutes when they were cleaning the classroom, before I was let inside. However, I must say that when being at both schools I experienced friendliness, respect and the feeling of being included.

Entry into the field for my research began in Norway in my advisors office at the Oslo University College. Before my first meeting with my advisor, I had spent most of spring 2008 contacting different NGO's both Norwegian and international, inquiring if I could visit one of their existing programmes on education as empowerment for women to do my fieldwork. CARE in Niger was the only one that showed interest, but very late in the process. I was quite nervous about the idea of travelling to a country where I did not speak the language and to an organization that seemed unserious, at least if one could measure seriousness from the few and far between email responses. During my first session with my advisor she asked me why not travel to South Africa, knowing that I knew the country from past experience as an exchange student and that she had a colleague at the University of Western Cape that she could set me in contact with. I was overwhelmed with the idea of going back to a country which in many ways had been my inspiration to applying for the master programme which I am now attending. Although my initial plan was to investigate an already existing programme, I was satisfied with travelling by myself, (making the first of many adjustments on my research proposal.)

After my first meeting with my advisor, everything seemed to fall into place. Within a few weeks I had been in contact with Dr. Nomlomo by email, bought my ticket to Cape Town,

⁵ Due to confidentiality agreement, the two schools I visited will not be mentioned by names, but as school A, the school in Nyanga township and school B, in the Khayelitsha township.

arranged for a place to stay and applied for financial support from the Save the Children's Foundation in Norway. Finally on October 8th 2008 I left for Cape Town.

The appointment I had made with Dr. Nomlomo was that I would contact her to arrange for a meeting after she was back from a trip to the Eastern Cape, around the 15th of October. After I had sent her several emails and got no response I one day took a taxi to the University, about 30 minutes from where I stayed and went to look for her office. Luckily, Dr. Nomlomo was in her office and we had a productive first meeting. She was happy I came by and had actually not received any of my mails, and was wondering why I had not been in touch. As my advisor had been my gatekeeper to South Africa, Dr. Nomlomo became my main gatekeeper to the townships around Cape Town.

It was through Dr. Nomlomo that I met with my research assistant. I needed a research assistant to translate and interpret from Xhosa to English. Dr. Nomlomo had arranged for one of her students at the Department of Education to assist me. My assistant's name was Nonjongo, a 23 year old student, aspiring to be a high school teacher one day.

In many ways I also view Nonjongo as a gatekeeper because without her my access into the townships might not have gone as smoothly as they did. In an unfamiliar and potentially scary situation, for instance driving my rental car inside the townships her presence made me calm and safe. And without her assistance throughout the entire data collection process I do not know if I had been able to (succeed in my work,) as I feel that I did with her by my side. However, having a research assistant also had its challenges. I believe the greatest factor contributing to some of the difficulties I experienced in the balancing of our relationship was our different backgrounds.

4.5 Research methods

For the data collection I intended to use three different types of methods. According to Bryman (2004:27) "a research method is simply a technique for collecting data". The techniques or tools I used to gather data for my research were observations, focus group discussion and individual interviewing. First off I made observations at school A and B, mainly in the classrooms. Secondly I conducted one focus group discussion at each school, with five and six girls in each group respectively. Following the focus group interviews I

conducted four individual in-depth interviews, two at each school, with two of the girls that had attended each of the focus groups. Next I will discuss each data collection technique individually in a more specific manner. Further on in this chapter I will also discuss the concept of triangulation and the relevance of using several different but interrelated data collection techniques.

4.5.1 Observations

I wanted to start off my research by observing the girls in the school situation. The reason why I chose observations as a tool in my data collection was simply because I wanted to see how the girls behaved at school. I wanted to observe the relationships between the girls and their teachers as well as the relationship between the girls. Subsequently I hoped to learn about the content of the education and to observe the teachers and girls use of English, which is the language of instruction, and the girls' and teachers mother tongue, Xhosa. One of the reasons for wanting to start with observation was generated from the fact that I hoped that seeing how the girls behaved in the school setting would give me more "flesh to the bone", so to speak, to the questions and thoughts I already had prepared for the focus group interview.

There are many aspects of observation as a tool of data collection in social research. "The first and most fundamental distinction that differentiates observational strategies concerns the extent to which the observer will be a participant in the setting being studied" (Patton 2002:265). Do I as a researcher want to be fully immersed in the activities that occur in the field or do I want to be completely separated from the ongoing activities, or do I want to move somewhere along the line with the two choices mentioned above as the contrasting end points? In my case the purpose of my research, including the setting, which mostly was the classroom, helped me restrict my choice of participation. "Participant observation is when the researcher participates in the setting that is being studied" (Durrheim and Terre Blance, 2006:315), and "... members of the social setting are aware of the researcher's status as a researcher" (Bryman 2004:301). For me it was natural to put myself in the category of participant observer, because of the intention behind my research, which was to observe the interactions and behaviours in the classrooms, but where I could not fully be a participant nor was I a complete spectator.

My role in the classroom during the observation sessions, the reasons why I was there, was clear to the teachers and the learners at all times. All the teachers that allowed me to observe during lessons had ahead of time signed a consent form⁶ on behalf of themselves and the learners present in the classroom. The consent form provided the teachers with information of the aims and processes of the research project (Scheyvens & Storey 2003). When entering a new classroom for the first time, meeting a new class of learners, I always introduced myself and told them a little bit about myself and what I was doing. Even though full openness, in other words doing overt observations, might mean that the participants act differently than they would if they were not being watched, I wanted to be completely honest with my participants, and by being honest I wanted to honour them for agreeing to participate in my research. I will return to the issue of the “observer paradox” (Holmarsdottir 2008b) and how my presence in the setting influenced the behaviour of the participants later on.

Patton (2002) claims that the first order purposes of observational data are to describe the *setting*, the *activities*, the *people who participated* in the activities and the *meaning behind* the activities. As a first time researcher I tried to have these points in the back of my mind when entering the classrooms for my observations, although at times it was not as easy as I had imagined. I will discuss the challenges I experienced in connection with the observations later on in this chapter.

Due to my arrival late in the school semester the teachers were already busy preparing the learners for the final exams, thus I was granted less time than I had hoped for at each school. During the sessions I had for observations, I was able to get approximately three days at each of the two schools, I constantly wrote field notes. “Field notes are the most important determinant of later bringing off a qualitative analysis” (Patton 2002:302). Despite the time limitations I was always observing the environment around me in a less formal matter. One day during my visit at school A, Nonjongo and I went outside the school premises to buy lunch at one of the local shops and I instinctively remember putting my researcher’s glasses on absorbing every detail.

⁶ The informed consent form for classroom observations is in Appendix E.

On the first day I basically wrote down everything I saw, felt and perceived as interesting, not really knowing what to look for. However, I tried to narrow my observational-eye and concentrated on the relationships that I wanted to investigate on day two and three. Along with the note taking and with permission from the school staff, I took some photographs of the school environment, classrooms, teachers lounge, school library, playground, building etc, thinking that looking at the pictures later could help me write a more descriptive analysis.

The reason why I conducting observations was to help myself to fine tune my research instruments before the focus group interview took place. The second part of my data collection was the focus group interviews which I will turn to next.

4.5.2 Focus group interview

“A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic” (Patton 2002:385). I anticipated and hoped that I would get the girls to talk about their experiences from school. I wanted to hear their stories and what they thought and felt about issues that had to do with the physical and social climate at their school. When I chose to use focus group interview as part of the data collection method, I intentionally wanted this to be a discussion forum. “The focus group offers the researcher the opportunity to study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meaning around it” (Bryman 2004:348). However, what I thought would be a focus group discussion, became more of a focus group interview where the girls answered one at a time to the questions I asked. The main reason for what I intended to be a group discussion became a group interview was because the girls and I spoke different languages and I could not follow the conversations when it played out in Xhosa. One of the lessons I learned as a first time researcher is that conducting a focus group has its limitations when the interviewer and the participants are not familiar/comfortable using the same language, which I will discuss further at the end of this chapter.

For me it was very important that the girls felt safe. Since I had been in the classrooms some time before the interview, the girls had an idea of who I was and what I was doing. However, before the session began I told them again who I was and that I would ask them some questions about their lives at school and at home. Nonjongo was with me at all times for

interpretations and translations. I informed the girls that Nonjongo would translate everything I said to Xhosa, and that they should answer the questions in which ever language they felt most comfortable with (English or Xhosa). The participants had all signed a consent form before they took part in the focus group.⁷ “An essential part of ethical research is ensuring people’s freedom not to participate...” (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:142), which I told the girls before the session started.

Preparing for the focus group interview I had designed an interview guide.⁸ The interview guide listed the topics and questions that I wanted to explore during the session, but allowed me to stand freely to rearrange the questions and wordings as I wished, making a natural flow in the conversations and discussions. “A interview guide is essential in conducting focus group interviews for it keeps the interactions *focused*, while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge” (Patton 2002:344). Although most of the interview guide was prepared prior to my arrival in South Africa, the observations in the classrooms helped me construct them to fit this group of girls more specifically.

The focus group sessions lasted approximately one hour and 15 minutes. To show the girls my appreciation for helping me, I gave them some coloured pens each after the session was over. “Your informants give up their time and provide you with information, but what do you give back in return?” (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:155). Giving something in return to the participants is called reciprocity (Patton 2002). From the observations I had learned that many of the girls were in need of pens, and when seeing their reactions to the gift I was sure I had chosen the right way to show my appreciation. As well as the pens, I also gave the girls a juice box each at school A and the girls at school B got a small packet each of crackers. I also informed the group that I would be talking more with two of them the following day.

During the focus group I used a dictaphone to record what the girls were saying, along with taking notes. Several dilemmas occurred in connection with recording the interview in this manner, one of them being the language issue, which I will discuss further on in this chapter. Another difficulty that I faced with the use of the dictaphone was that the external

⁷ The informed consent form for the interviews is in Appendix D.

⁸ The interview guide for the focus group interview is in Appendix B.

microphone I had purchased was attached to a headset and that it best captured the voice of the person who was wearing the headset. After testing the sound of the recordings when the headset was in the middle of the group on a chair for example, I realized that a significant amount of background noise was picked up by the microphone, drowning out the voices. I decided that it would be best that Nonjongo wore the headset since I assumed she would speak the most, translating from Xhosa to English. The problem was that when the girls spoke English, some spoke more and better than others, their voices were not captured on the audio recorder. However, despite this, I believe I managed to get enough information to answer my research questions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that any interview should be subjected to triangulation and further cross checking. After the focus group interviews I picked two participants from each group to discuss further with them in more detail in hope of getting even more in-depth information. At both schools I chose the two girls that I thought could give me more detailed information on what it was like to be a girl in a township school in Cape Town. The similarities between the two girls from each school that I chose to interview personally, was that they “stood out” the most during the focus group interview, in the sense that they felt safe and comfortable sharing their stories with me. All four girls in total were eager and very talkative, and I sensed that they had more to share with me.

4.5.3 Individual interviews

“The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research” (Bryman 2002: 319).

The interview guide approach was also used for the individual interviews as well as the focus group. The topics for the individual interviews were the same as for the focus groups, namely; home, school and future. However, the difference between the guides was that in the individual interview guide, there were more questions under the home section, in addition to more in depth questions regarding the school section. With more personal questions I wanted to see the more personal side of the girls, so I could try to imagine how it was like to grow up and all the time be exposed to the dangers that follow when living in the townships. I had not prepared the questions for the individual interviews beforehand, in Norway, as I had for the focus groups, because it was through the focus groups that most of the individual interview questions emerged. Using the interview guide approach I had the topics and issues I wanted

to cover prepared in advance but I had the opportunity to decide the sequences and wording of the questions as I saw fit during the interview.

Patton (2002) distinguishes between a series of question options, some of them being experience questions, emotions questions, background questions and knowledge questions. “Distinguishing types of questions forces the interviewer to be clear about what is being asked and helps the interviewee respond appropriately” (Patton 2002:348). During preparation for the individual interviews I was conscious about what types of questions that I would ask, trying to cover most of Patton’s (2002) question types.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) one of the fundamentals in qualitative research is the benefits that rise with the use of in-depth interviewing. “The participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective)” (Marshall and Rossmann 2006:101). By not asking leading questions I wanted to capture the girl’s own perspective of their everyday life at school in their own words.

An ethical aspect that I had to consider during the individual interview, in addition to the consent forms which the girls had signed in advance was the issue of how hard I should push the girls for sensitive information. While the focus group interview was to get to know the girls on the surface, the individual interviews were meant to give me more in-depth information of them personally. During three out of the four interviews there were times that the girl’s started to cry because of the sad situation they were telling me about. When these situations occurred I tried to be as sensitive as possible towards the girls. I told the girls that they could tell me what they wanted, not to push them into telling me anything that they did not want to because of the sensitivity of the topics.

I wanted to show the four girls that I had interviewed, how grateful I was for them sharing their stories with me, in addition to the colour pens they got after the focus group, I had bought them each a diary, with a lock and a key. All the girls were very happy for this book, and we talked about how if bad things happen they could write down their thoughts. I was very satisfied with the choice of reciprocity as I felt it suited the situation.

During the individual interview as well as the focus groups I used a dictaphone to record the interview in addition to taking notes. However, during the individual interviews at school B,

I accidentally managed to put the two wires, from the headset to the dictaphone in the wrong outlets on the dictaphone, resulting in that what I thought I had recorded had not been picked up the microphone. Luckily, I discovered this right before Nonjongo and I left the school building, and by memory we were able to capture the essentials of the interviews.

Unfortunately, I did not get that many direct quotes from these interviews that I would have, if the recording had gone smoothly.

In the following section I will continue to share some of the other challenges and limitations I meet during the fieldwork.

4.6 Challenges and limitations

As mentioned before, in qualitative and naturalistic inquiry the research instrument is the researcher her/him-self. This has many implications for the research as a whole. First off one can discuss the concept of the “observers paradox” (Holmarsdottir 2008b), merely how the presence of the researcher may affect how the research participants behave and respond.

Usually when doing observations over a longer period of time the researcher can notice that the participants who, for instance had a nervous stutter or occasional flushed face, ease up and become ‘themselves’ again, even though the researcher still is ‘inside’ their setting.

Human beings can only for so long pretend to be different then they really are. Unfortunately I had limited time doing my observations which might mean that some of the teachers and learners acted differently than they normally would if I had not been present. This factor is taken under considerations when analysing the findings. Despite the short time and the possible behaviour changes, I believe I collected ‘valid’ data from my days of being a participant observer. In addition, the observations played a part in giving me a sense of how things were and helped tune my attention towards the focus group interview questions.

The concept of “reflexivity” can also be discussed when a human being is the instrument used for data collection and data analysis. According to Durrheim and Terre Blanche (2006) the concept of reflexivity stems from feminist social research and involves how the researcher’s demographics and personal characteristics play a part in the eliciting of data. In my opinion when a human being is the data collection- and data analysis instrument the research will be somewhat subjective. Even though one uses methods for making sure that

the research is 'true' and 'real', like triangulation, I believe it is almost impossible for the study to have no trace of the author in it.

Critics of qualitative research have claimed that the approach is too subjective. However qualitative methodologists believe that it is necessary to show empathy and be sympathetic in research because without it the observer cannot fully understand the human behaviour that she is observing. Patton (2002) offers the phrase 'empathic neutrality' as good starting point for qualitative researchers. He continues, "... there is a middle ground between becoming too involved, which can cloud judgement, and remaining too distant, which can reduce understanding"(Patton 2002:50). As a first time researcher I tried to embrace this middle ground of 'empathic neutrality' when I collected my data in the township schools.

Another challenge that I had to overcome during the fieldwork was the language issue. The girls spoke Xhosa as their mother tongue and English (as a second or third language) since it was the medium of instruction in the schools. The degree of how well they spoke English varied a great deal. Initially I thought this would be a minor problem since I would have Nonjongo with me at all times to translate, however, language became an issue throughout the fieldwork. At times during the interviews I felt that information might have gotten lost in translation, due to the fact that Nonjongo's English skills were not excellent. For instance, when the girls replied to a question in Xhosa, they could speak for a long time, but when Nonjongo translated, I felt that the answer was shortened. There were other times as well, when I felt like an 'outsider', when jokes and small remarks were made in Xhosa and I did not understand anything. Several times they tried to explain to me what was funny, which was kind of them, but "...lack of local knowledge can lead to inappropriate...data and can generate feelings of frustration and low morale" (Scheyvnes & Storey 2003:135). Although I am, in retrospect, satisfied with both the amount and quality of data collected, I admit feeling frustrated at times due to my lack of the local knowledge. However, "...there is seldom space for developing language fluency within most Masters or Doctoral programmes (Robson, 1997:70; Veeck, 2001:34 in Scheyvens and Storey, 2003:135). As a researcher conducting research in a country or within a context which is not his/her own, one will always have some limitations. However, being an outsider, gave me the advantage of discovering something else than an insider in the environment might have discovered. A South African might not have emphasized and interpreted the data in the same way as I have done.

Furthermore, time constrain also limit this study. The field work period was only six weeks long, which I consider a limited time to fully understand the society being studied. In addition, due to the timing of my visit, I was only able to visit school B for three days.

4.7 Trustworthiness

There are variations in opinion on how well the case study is eligible or suited for the research design criteria's of internal – and external validity, reliability and replicability. Some case study writers, like Yin (1984) consider these criteria as important in case study as in any experimental design, and suggests ways in which case study writers can enhance their ability to meet the above mentioned criteria. Other writers like Stake (1995) mention validation in the form of triangulation, but does not emphasize at all the importance of the criteria mentioned by Yin (1984). I believe it is up to every author to let him or her decide for themselves how much weight to put on the criteria of validity, reliability etc. and on the nature of the case. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, my case is what Bryman (2004) categorizes as an exemplifying case, the case is not chosen because it is extreme or unusual, but because I believe it will provide a suitable context for my specific research questions. My aim with this research was not to generalize my results, but get an understanding and a look into the lives of the two groups of girls I interviewed.

4.7.1 Triangulation

Denzin (1978 in Lincoln and Guba 1985:305) suggests that different modes of triangulation exist: the use of multiple and different sources, methods and investigators. In my research I have in some way or another used all four of Denzin's (1978) modes of triangulation. First off, I investigated two units of analysis, in other words two township Primary schools. Within those two schools, I obtained multiple sources of information. I conducted two focus group interviews with five and six girls in each group, and a total of four individual interviews, in addition to a number of informal talks with the school's staff.

In this piece of research I have used three different methods to collect data: classroom observations, focus group interviews and individual interviews. When combining all the above mentioned research methods, I used what Patton (2002) refers to as method triangulation. It

simply means that a researcher uses multiple methods to study a single problem. These are three different methods, that all have strengths and weaknesses; however I found that they complemented each other nicely. “Limitations in one method can be compensated for by strengths of a complementary one” (Marshall and Rossmann 2006:131). I felt that I followed a ‘read thread’ when first doing observations followed by focus group interviews, than finally the individual interviews. Each data collection method gave me more information that I used in the following step of the process.

The third triangulation mode suggested by Denzin (1978) is the use of multiple investigators. During the process of collecting data I had Nonjongo with me at all times. Although she initially was with me only to translate and interpret when I needed her to, she ended up helping me with the data collection in several ways. “While the researcher obviously has much to gain both professionally and personally from the relationship, research assistants too can be enriched by the experience” (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:132). I knew that Nonjongo, in her next semester of her teacher’s education would have to do her own research, so with that in mind and hoping that she could contribute to my data collection I gave her two pens and a notebook on the first day of observations at school A and said to her that she could jot down her own observations. She was more than eager to do this, both to help me and by doing it, practicing for her own research. At the end of the data collection period Nonjongo gave me all the material she had collected. I had intentionally not told her what or how to observe, initially thinking that by giving her a notebook of her own would make her feel more part of the process. During the stage of analysing the data I went through Nonjongo’s field notes and discovered that we had made many of the same discoveries.

The “demographics” Nonjongo and I have in common narrows down to three things; female, early twenties and taking higher education at university level, apart from this Nonjongo and I have totally different backgrounds and ways of thinking. I believe having two so different mind sets at work towards the same goal, contributes to what Denzin (1987) thought of using the term multiple investigators. By triangulating these different data I attempt to improve the credibility of the study.

In the chapter that follows the findings in which were collected with the methods that have been discussed in this chapter are presented. Some of Nonjongo’s personal notes are also included in the findings chapter that follows.

5. FINDINGS

In this section I will introduce data from my research which I collected during fieldwork, attempting to give the reader a feeling of some of the raw data material I have been working with. The fieldwork took place in Cape Town from October 8th 2008 to November 19th 2008. In total, I conducted two focus group interviews with 11 girls, four of whom I subsequently interviewed individually. Field notes taken during six days of formal classroom observations and non-formal observation will be used, along with notes from informal talks with teachers and Nonjongo. Teachers and girls will not be referred to by name, but by numbers due to aspects from the confidentiality agreement, already mentioned. The names of the primary schools will be referred to as school A and school B. I will attempt to use the girl's own words as much as possible, although some of the text and words are rephrased to make it more understandable. Data will be introduced in three themes, coinciding with the specific objectives of this thesis, and will include the following:

- Home- How the girls' situation is at home? How are the girls' social surroundings?
- School- How is the physical environment at the schools? What and how are they taught? How are the teacher and learner relationships?
- Future- How do the girls portray their future? What is the meaning of education subjectively for the girls?

The data analysis process will now be examined so the reader gets an insight into the analysis process that took place, before I present the data. In the following chapter I will analyze and discuss the data which I have presented here, allowing me and the reader to understand what lies hidden beneath the surface of the girls' responses, and will help me in answering the main objective.

5.1 Analysis of the data

“Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as final compilations” (Stake 1995: 71). Analysis of data material collected within qualitative research is often a

large amount and not always easy to analyze. Unlike quantitative research, there is no set of rules to follow when analyzing the data in qualitative research, and one often asks: ‘what do I do with all this information?’ In qualitative research the researcher concentrates on trying to pull the information apart only to put the pieces back together again by giving it more meaning (Stake 1995). Miles (1979) describes qualitative data as an ‘attractive nuisance’, because of the attractiveness of the richness, but the difficulty of finding analytic paths through that richness (cited in Bryman 2004:399). Most analysis within qualitative data is done with words, often from field notes such as observations and in-depth interviews.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) the researcher should use preliminary research questions as guidelines for the analysis. The researcher’s earlier work for instance an interview guide can be used as a foundation for developing categories containing codes, concepts and classes which are helpful for the subsequent analysis. Patton (2002) describes this process as *inductive analysis*, namely discovering patterns and themes in one’s data. However, before the coding takes place, every interview and field observation needs to be transcribed and organized. Through the analysis process, starting with transcribing, coding and putting the pieces back together in a meaningful matter, you end up with a research product, in this case a thesis.

For this analysis I have used the preliminary research questions/topics to organize the material, dividing it into three themes namely home, school and future. During my fieldwork I wrote large amounts of field notes, taking shape in both notes from observations and personal journal entries, and also recorded several hours of audio files during individual interviews and focus groups. Bits and pieces from the interviews, field notes and personal journal have been put together to make up the findings.

When reading through the transcribed interviews I used a color coded system to separate each of the three topics from each other. I subsequently used the same color code system when looking through the many pages of observation field notes. I rewrote the field notes into more readable text, weeding out the redundant material, marking quotes I believed were descriptive of a situation, using sub-categories for each of the three sections which I had made ahead of time. Following this I looked at each topic separately, often going back to the main research question, so not to forget what I was actually looking for within each topic. This way I helped myself organize the material, making it time efficient when I went through

the material the second, third and fourth time. “In many studies the analyst will work directly and selectively from the raw data to write the final case study” (Patton 2002:450). Despite the preparation work, I often found myself going back to the original data during the writing process, both observation notes and the audio files to make sure I had understood the meaning correctly. I will now continue with the findings on the girl’s home life, presenting their social situation, using direct quotes from the focus group (fg) interviews and the individual interviews (ii) whenever suitable in the text.

5.2 Home life

Being a girl growing up in a township in post-apartheid Cape Town is challenging. Exposure to poverty, crime, drugs, alcoholism and the fear of being kidnapped or raped on a daily basis unfortunately forces a child to grow up too quickly. One’s childhood is in some ways robbed from you. This was the perception I got talking to the girls during my fieldwork in Khayelitsha and Nyanga. The place and people involved in one’s upbringing has rippling affects on one’s life. Although the discussion of nature vs. nurture/genetic-, vs. environmental determinants in what makes a person who he or she is, is controversial, nonetheless, there leaves no doubt that environment plays a critical role in a child development (Pervin, Cervone and John 2005).

In the following section I will attempt to present an inside view into the home life of the four girl’s I talked too individually. Girl 1 and Girl 2 attended school A in Nyanga and Girl 3 and Girl 4 attended school B in Khayelitsha. All four girls had previously attended the focus group interview at their respective schools. As mentioned in the methods chapter the focus group interview questions focused mostly on their general school situation, to get insight into the school culture. I intentionally only asked these four girls in depth about their home situation because I imagined not everyone would be comfortable talking about their private lives in plenary. The stories I was told about the everyday home life of the girls bear evidence of both good and happy times, producing laughter and smiles as well as fear and sadness, followed by tears and quietness.

5.2.1 Getting to know the girls

Girl 1 from Nyanga lives with her 19 year old sister and 15 year old brother in a three room home with a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom, about a five minute walk from school. When I asked her in English about her parents, she explains in Xhosa to Nonjongo, that both her parents are dead. The girls usually answered in English when the questions and consequently their answers were of a positive nature. While on the other hand, if the questions were more delicate, they usually answered in Xhosa. Of course I cannot be certain whether or not the switch of language was caused by their lack of English skills, that they did not feel adequate enough to express themselves as well in English or the fact that expressing personal stories and showing emotions is easier in one's mother tongue. She tells us that her mother died from asthma and her father drowned in a river. This upset her very much and even though I was curious about what happened to them I tried to make the situation more comfortable for her. However, one could not help but notice that she had been tapping her feet nervously since the interview started, so I did not want to add to what already felt like an uncomfortable situation for her. The content of the conversation got lighter from there on, although she was still answering in short, mostly yes and no answers, her eyes had more light.

Girl 2 lives in a home consisting of two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom with 10 of her relatives in the township of Nyanga. Her parents live and work in Johannesburg and Durban together with her two older brothers. Her grandmother is the head of the home and the one who takes care of her, she tells me in English. She tells me that she walks to school every morning with her two cousins, using about 30 minutes.

Girl 3 from Khayelitsha lives with her mother and father in a three room house, which includes a bathroom, a bedroom and a kitchen. They live about five minutes from the school ground. With teary eyes she tells the story of her younger sisters being taken away by child protective services from her home the previous year, due to her mother's alcoholism, when I ask her about her family. She tells me that her mother is unemployed, but her father works in a factory in Cape Town, securing the family financially. Girl 3 has beautiful long braids in her hair, and Nonjongo tells me that those braids are the expensive kind, implying that her family must have money.

Girl 4 also from Khayelitsha lives with her mother in a shack⁹ about 30 minutes walking distance from the school. “When it rains the water drips through the tin ceiling and makes everything wet” (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08), she tells me, implying that the poor state of the shack they live in is a consequence of her mother’s unemployment and lack of income. Girl 4’s father left her and her mother when she was a small child and they do not have any contact with him. She believes that her father hates her because he does not support her and her mother financially, even though he has the means to do so. Girl 4 has an older brother who does not live with her and her mother because he is an alcoholic.

I was curious to learn what the girls did for fun during their free time, when they were not attending school. In addition to getting to know what the girls did on their personal time, these “fun” and easy questions also made our conversations flow better after the girls had shared stories that made them sad and quiet. ‘Generations’ is a popular television soap opera that all of the girls enjoy watching. Girl 1, 3 and 4 told me that they dreamed to be like the actresses on the show and that watching the program was a good escape from reality.

Girl 3 and 4 both enjoy reading romance novels, they told me, but it was sometimes difficult for them to find books. The public library was far away and the selection at the school library was scarce. I will return to the two school’s library at a later point in this chapter. One thing that all the four girls had in common was their positive view of religion and that attending church was one of the things that made them happiest.

All of the girls emphasized their religious belief and seemed happy when the topic comes up during our talks. One of the girl’s families owned a private car and if they have money for petrol they usually attend church every Sunday. The rest of the girls used public transportation to get to church, and they attended church as often as they could if they have bus fare. At school A there is a religious ceremony in the school yard every Monday and Friday morning.

I watch the children standing in their green, white and grey uniforms crossing their arms and closing their eyes praying, some of them closing their eyes very tightly as if they were praying extra hard. After the prayer they started singing again, loudly while

⁹ Shacks are usually constructed out of timber and recycled materials such as plastic, cardboard, old newspapers and planks, often collected from rubbish dumps.

clapping their hands to the rhythm and their bodies swaying a bit back and forth, like small leaves on a tree just slightly touched by a warm breeze. The sun was starting to warm up the courtyard and the car horns and traffic noises from the street vanished in the beautiful sounds of the song (personal notes 03.11.08).

5.2.2 Social surroundings

Criminals, people dealing and being addicted to drugs and alcohol are situations the girls encounter every day, either within the home or in their near surroundings. However, both the girls from Khayelitsha tell me that they feel safe when they are at home. Girl 4 tells me that if something bad were to happen, her brother would come and help her. “He will either talk to that person or he will beat that person” (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08). However, when they walk to school, they said they were more afraid. During the focus group interview, with five girls from school B, I was told a story of a boy that used to go to their school that had been kidnapped, drugged and taken to Cape Town. They were not sure exactly what had happened to him, because when he returned a few days later he was still drugged and he did not remember what had happened. They were afraid something like that would happen to them. The girls also shared with me that they rarely brought their cell phones and accessories to school, even on Fridays, when it was allowed to wear accessories with the school uniform, because they were afraid of the robbers who would steal their belongings.

The two girls from Nyanga, on the other hand, were unfortunately very afraid sometimes when they were at home. The neighbor to Girl 1 is a drug dealer and during the evenings and nights his customers sometimes mistake her home with the drug dealers’, making her afraid that they might hurt her. Girl 2 is scared sometimes also in her neighborhood.

“I feel scared sometimes because on the weekend and afternoons some people are drinking alcohol and sometimes they come to our home when only kids there and then we don’t feel safe” (Girl 2 ii 04.11.08).

She tells me her uncle uses their home for his place of business for dealing drugs. The sad presence is once again present in the library, where our interviews take place, when the girls share their stories.

5.2.3 Safety – Or lack thereof

It is often said that poverty breeds crime. Of course this does not mean that all who come from disadvantaged backgrounds become criminals or that all criminals come from a disadvantaged backgrounds, but the link is there. When poverty is present, as it was and still is in the townships I visited, where people suffer from want and need, the likelihood of seeing individuals who will engage in criminal activity are most likely higher than in a more affluent area, where everyone has a job and enough money for food. When people do not have jobs, resulting in no money, they might more easily turn to other means of ‘income’ such as crime, drug dealing or prostitution. This sad fact was exemplified by one of the male teachers I spoke to at school B. He will from now on be referred to as Male Teacher 2.

After a day of observations in one of the classrooms at school B, watching the same class being taught by three different teachers rotating between the two grade 7 classrooms, I got into a deep conversation with Male Teacher 2. He had only a few weeks ago been informed by another member of the staff that a 12 year old girl, in grade four, was having sex with old men for money. He came into this story when we were talking about the poverty situation that reigns in the township. He told me that he had approached this girl wanting to help her in some way. “During our talk she confessed everything to me and she was not ashamed of it” (Male teacher 2 11.11.08). I asked him if there might have been any other incentive behind her actions besides money and he replied “...this (the prostitution) is something she does only for money, because she is so poor and does not know any better”(Male teacher 2 11.11.08). After his talk with her, he wrote a letter of concern for the girl to give to her parents, but he did not know if the letter had been passed on and if the parents were aware of the situation. He told me that he had not talked to the girl anymore either, because she was not at school very often and when she was she hid from him.

Male Teacher 2 continued sharing information, from his 17 year long track record as a teacher at school B, that he had been witness to several of these situations. He felt helpless and told me, “...what can I do, except try to talk to the learners and their parents?”(Male teacher 2 12.11.08). When describing some of the learner’s parents he used the word naïve and continued, “When you are hungry and don’t have money to buy food for your family, one might do things, for instance, turn a blind eye to that your son or daughter is dealing drugs for nearby drug dealers” (Male Teacher 2 11.11 08). After this statement he pointed his

finger out into the classroom where his learners were sitting, and said that is unfortunately the reality for many of them.

Moreover, Male teacher 2 shares his views on the how some parents are neglecting towards their children, in the sense of parents involvement with school.

Some parents just don't care anymore. If my child went to school for five days and I never saw him/her work at home, I would be concerned (Male teacher 2 10.11.2008).

I will now turn to the section involving school life for the girls.

5.3 School culture/Life at school

In this section, the school settings, the school activities and the people involved in the settings will be examined. I will start with the physical environment of school A and school B, describing them separately. Furthermore, I will describe the three activities I find the most interesting and relevant to the main objective of this thesis namely the teaching methods, the content and issue of LOI. Aware of the fact that each of these issues is very broad I will only focus on what I believe to be of value for this thesis. Additionally, the interrelations between the girls and the teachers will be looked at. The empirical evidence introduced in this section is based on observations, focus group and individual interviews, in addition to informal talks with the teachers. I will use as much of the girl's own words as possible. Although, the topic of this thesis is targeted girls, it was difficult not to also see the boys during the classroom observations. Subsequently, when I sometimes refer to the learners I mean girls and the boys in the classroom.

According to the girls, school is a good place to be. The girls felt that they were treated equally to the boys. When asking the girls how they felt about being in school some of the responses were:

School is a place where you go and learn and you learn when you are having fun, like when the teachers play games we can have fun and that is so good about school (fg 2 11.11.08).

I am here because I want to learn new things and to build my future (fg 1 03.11.08).

You learn new things, because people have a lack of knowledge about HIV and Aids, now we learn more about that (fg 1 03.11.08).

I will return to how school is for the girls after a brief description of the physical school buildings and the surroundings.

5.3.1 School A

The school is situated in Nyanga township, approximately 26 minutes from Cape Town city centre. The school is on the edge of the township, across the street from the busy buss/combi rank. When I arrived by car the first day one of the learners unlocked and opened the white metal gate. The gate was attached to a wire fence, enclosing the entire school property. I learned later that grade seven boys took turns being responsible for opening the gate, when cars were to enter. A job the boys took very seriously.

The school was built as two squares put together, if one saw it from the air. Buildings of half red brick and half yellow cement at each side, closing the square with two open spaces in the middle. The learners were separated by which grade they were in, and grades one to four were in the left set of buildings, facing the homes of the township, while grades five to seven in the set of buildings to the right, facing a busy street corner, across from the local buss/combi stop. The courtyard in the middle was half pavement and half dried grass, light brown from the burning sun. Behind the two buildings facing the street was a big sand playground with two jungle gym's for the learners to play on. The open space in the middle of the four buildings had several purposes. It was used as playground where soccer games were played during the lunch break, a place where physical education/gym was taught and for the Monday and Friday morning prayers.

The classrooms I was inside were quite similar. From my view when sitting in the back of the classroom I faced a green chalkboard, in one of the classrooms the teacher's desk was in front also, while in the other classroom the teacher's desk was placed in the back. Basically the only difference in physical appearance in the classrooms was the location of the desk, and posters on the walls. I spent most of my time in the classroom with the teacher's desk in front, which I will consequently describe. On the left side of me there were three windows facing the street and on my right side there were three windows facing the courtyard. On the walls inside the classroom one can see educational posters hung up on the walls, some of which the learners had made themselves. The themes of the posters varied from technology to life orientation, showing the steps of a pregnancy, from conception to the birth; colourful

maps of the world that the learners had drawn; and stickers with a red bow, the HIV/Aids symbol, were on both the door and walls.

In an average classroom at school A, there were approximately 50-60 learners present during class. The desks and benches were attached and usually seated three-four learners. There was not much floor space left which made it challenging for the teachers to move around. At school A the three grade seven teachers each have their respective classrooms, where they teach two subjects each. The learners circulate from classroom to classroom, and were in each classroom being taught by each of the three teachers every day. The learners did not have regular places where they sit.

The teacher's lounge was a quite big room with a long table in the middle surrounded by wooden chairs. On the left wall there was a refrigerator, a microwave and a sink. The other walls were covered with educational posters, and calendars. One calendar stood out from the rest, it was from the Department of Education and was entitled "School Health Calendar". Each month had a message, for instance, January was entitled "Back to School Month", with the slogan "Back to School, Back to Life". The month of August was entitled "Women's Month", with the slogan "Women with education are women with power-Educate a woman, educate a nation". The month of November, was called "Safety Month", "Child-friendly Schools-Safe schools, a safety net for our children". The text was in English and Xhosa. On the bottom of the colourful calendar it was written "Promoting Health through Education" (DoE 2008).

The library where the interviews were conducted was a little room with pink and orange walls and grey wall to wall carpet. To enter the library one had to go through the teacher's lounge and through another little room with two copying machines. On the floor were two bean bags to sit on, so for the interviews the girls brought extra chairs from the teacher's lounge. Two of the walls, one long and one short wall had bookshelves against them. Most of the books were placed standing up in a fan shape, so the library appeared fuller than it actually was. Most of the books on the shelves were small-children's books with many pictures and not so much text and most of the books were in English.

5.3.2 School B

School B is situated in the township of Khayelitsha, about 40km from Cape Town city centre. One has to drive quite some time from the highway into the township before arriving at the school. The school is on a field enclosed by a wire fence. The local secondary school is across the street.

When entering the school property by car, you drive through an electrical gate which is opened from inside the school building. This gate was put up six months prior to my visit. The first brick building that one sees from the parking lot is the school office building. From the office building to the end of the school property are three buildings with sets of classrooms, a pavement courtyard separating each building. The classrooms and the learners are separated by age, the lower classes furthest from the office building. At the end of the first courtyard between the office building and the row of classrooms belonging to the grade seven learners I visited, was a blue shipping container. This blue shipping container was what the school used for their library space.

The focus group interview was held in the library, which I was informed by several staff members, was only a temporary solution for the library. “We have to make the most of what we have”, they told me. The container had been painted white inside, and there were put in two windows, with bars on the outside and a door. The door did not fit into the doorframe, so during the focus group interview the door flew open several times due to the wind, before we jammed it with a newspaper. Wooden bookshelves were attached to one of the long walls and one of the short walls of the shipping container. The books on the shelves were, as in school A, standing with back and front cover spread out, (spread out as a fan). This way the books acquired more space and the shelves seemed fuller. Compared to school A, however, the books stood even farther apart. In the far end of the container, on the floor beneath a bookshelf there were eight see-through plastic bags with text books for different subjects in them, which had not been opened. The book shelf in the far end of the container, stood out compared to the rest of the shelves, at both schools. The books were not spread out, but packed together, so one could only see the book spine. The books that filled the shelf were more of the adult and teenage kind, than the children’s books on the long shelf, fictional books both crime and romance novels. For instance C.S Lewis’ books on Narnia were present. On the container wall with the windows you see educational posters and newspaper

articles hung up. One of the posters was about the different religions there are, another was about the importance of personal hygiene.

At school B, the grade seven learners and teachers had two classrooms at their disposal. Compared to at school A, where the teachers had their regular classrooms and the learners rotated from each classroom, school B did the opposite. The four grade 7 teachers rotated between the two classrooms, while the learners could stay in one classroom, sitting in regular seats. The classrooms at school B, had two rows consisting of eight small windows, each window divided into four squares again, on the long wall to the left when sitting in the back of the classroom. In the classroom I spent the most time five of the 16 windows were broken, forcing the learners who sat underneath the windows to wear their hoods and jackets inside, when the wind blew the rain inside the classroom. Even on sunny days, with 20 degrees Celsius outside, the draft made the room cold. The desks and benches were attached, similar to school A, seating two or three learners, although due to the small space, not all the learners were facing the green board in the front of the classroom, again similar to school A. There were approximately 50-60 learners in each class.

The back wall and the long wall on the right side of the classroom I spent the most time were covered with educational posters, some of which the learners had made themselves. One of the handwritten posters had the head line “Female Group- advantages and disadvantages of adoption and abortion”.

It is good for them to know the disadvantages of abortion, because teenage pregnancy is targeted them, and they are the ones involved (Nonjongo’s comment 10.11.08).

Another one of the handmade posters was a set of classroom rules, which will be discussed further later on in this section. I will in the following section discuss the content of the education.

5.3.3 The educational content

One of the core points in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2005a) is that this curriculum is written by South African’s for South Africans who hold dear the principles and practices of democracy. The creators of the document envision learners who are knowledgeable and multi-faceted, able to respond to and act upon the many challenges that

will confront South Africa in this twenty first century. The eight learning areas stated in the NCS are: Arts and Cultures, Economic and Management Sciences, Languages, Life Orientation, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology (DoE 2005a). In this section of educational content, the subject of Life Orientation (LO) will be emphasised because I believe it to be one of the most important learning areas, also reflecting the educational learning outcomes set by the international community regarding education for girls. Additionally, I believe these outcomes reflect the core of what an empowering situation is. The learning assessments in LO entail five learning outcomes which should enable the learner to:

- Make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health;
- Demonstrate an understanding and a commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions;
- Use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world;
- Demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in, activities that promote movement and physical development;
- Making informed decisions about further studies and future career choices (DoE 2005a:26).

I will later on discuss the other learning area which I believe to be the most important and is the basis for all learning areas, namely the issue of language.

The teachers at both school A and B have two or three subjects each. In both schools the teachers triangulate different subjects, working with the same topic in different subjects as well as giving relevant and real life examples to the educational information. At school A for instance, English, Xhosa and LO were triangulated through the reading book of the year, “Whitney’s Kiss”¹⁰. Almost all the learners had their own copy of the book in both English and Xhosa. The theme of the book entailed the topic of HIV and common misunderstandings around this topic. The lead character in the book was a thirteen year old girl in her last year of primary school. Working with this book involved learners reading out loud and for themselves in class, as well as answering questions about the content after each chapter,

¹⁰ A short summary of ‘Whitney’s Kiss’ is in Appendix F.

followed by class discussions. Female teacher 1 told me during one of our informal talks that by reading the book both in English class and in Xhosa the learners understood the message of the book clearer. I discussed the book with the girls during focus group and all of them liked it very much. “We learn many things from reading the book, things like when you have HIV or Aids, how to live with it and how it affects your friends and family” (fg1 03.11.08). Answering the question of what they had learned in school that they could make use of their everyday lives, many of the girls referred to “Whitney’s Kiss”. “We have learned not to do things that can make us sick, from what we have read in the book about Whitney” (fg1 03.11.08).

As previously mentioned the classroom walls at both schools were filled with educational posters, some of which the learners had made themselves. Many of the posters were dedicated to the subject of LO. For instance in one of the classrooms at school B, one of the posters reads “Advantages and Disadvantages of Abortion and Adoption”. The girls had made this poster in groups in LO class. The transferability from school knowledge to the outside world became evident when the girls were asked what they had learned in school that they could use in their home lives. “In life orientation we learned that when you have sex you must wear a condom” (fg2 11.11.08). “We learned that we should abstain from sex” (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08). The girls had learned about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD’s) and memorized a rule about sex which they recited out loud for me during the focus group. “ABC, Abstinence, Be faithful, Condomize” (fg 2 11.11.08). Girl 4 told me during the focus group how important she thought this information was.

I think it is wonderful that we learned information like this, because when you go to high school you will know. When you go to high school the older kids will see that you are mature and old and they won’t get confused and think you don’t know anything (Girl 4 fg2 11.11.08).

The girls had somewhat different opinions on what the appropriate age for sex was, their answers varying from 18 to 30. However all of them agreed on that 13, the age they were at that point, was too early. “No, not now, we are still teenagers” (fg2 11.11.08).

The learners were made active participants in their education in other areas as well. Next to the board in one of the classrooms at school B, there hung a set of class rules. On how and who had made those rules they answered:

...the learners made them with the teacher. She wanted us to make the rules so that when we broke them, we couldn't say anything because it was us that had made them. If we broke them she could say, 'You made the rules, you have to follow them' (fg2 11.11.08).

Contextualizing the content to the personal setting (especially micro-, and mesosystems) of the girls was a learning method frequently observed at both schools. The textbook sentences the teachers wrote on the board for the learners to copy were full of cultural diversity, mirroring the countries diversity. In an English lesson at school A, typical African, English and Afrikaans names were used in the sentences in addition to places/cities across the country, Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town etc. At school B, Male Teacher 2 connected the curriculum to current events as often as he could, he told me. In one history lesson he mentioned the war in Congo and the trouble in Zimbabwe regarding the re-election of Robert Mugabe. He connected Barack Obama's presidential victory to Nelson Mandela's fight for freedom, the ANC and the development of the SADC (South African Development Community), to the upcoming government elections. "They are all a part of history" Male Teacher 2 said to me, referring to the learners.

The teaching material available for the teachers was limited and they had to make the best of what they had. In most subjects, the teacher was the only one with a textbook and photo copies of assignments and reading texts were handed out to the learners for them to glue into their notebooks. In addition, a teaching method that was used frequently in the classrooms of both schools was that the teachers would write lesson from the one textbook they had onto the chalkboards for the learners to copy into their notebooks. The following is an observation from school B on the use of such a teaching method:

He (male teacher 1) writes from *the* textbook onto the board for them to copy. A lot of classroom –time is used for this. The noise level is high when he writes down the lesson... He spent over twenty minutes doing this, could this time have been more valuably spent? (observation 10.11.2008).

In the next section I will present the issue of language of instruction.

5.3.4 Language of instruction

The language of instruction used in many schools throughout Africa today is often not the learner's mother tongue. This is also the case for the girls and the two schools I visited.

The language of instruction is English at both school A and B. Except for the subject of Xhosa, which is in and about Xhosa, the medium of instruction, the textbooks and the end of the year exams are all in English. English is the learner's second or third language, while Xhosa is the learner's mother tongue. However, as I observed several times during my days in the classrooms at both school A and B was that the practice of using English as the LOI was not always consistent. For instance, all explanations of the lessons were first given in English, then in Xhosa. The following passage is taken from my observations at school A showing such a situation.

Learners seem to only speak in English when talking out loud in class, when answering questions from the teachers. Otherwise, the language spoken is Xhosa between each other and in informal talks with the teachers. However, when they do speak English, in formal response, they several times switch to Xhosa in the middle of sentences. The learners do this often when they do not find the word they are looking for in English. The teacher usually replied in Xhosa as well (observation 31.10.08).

Nonjongo also wrote a comment regarding the language used in the classroom, which I think is relevant:

Although the teachers are to teach in English he code switches, which I think is good idea because the learners of the town ships are having problems in there language affluence, because Xhosa is their mother tongue (Nonjongo's comment 10.11.08).

During the focus groups and the individual interviews the girls had a choice to either answer the questions in English or Xhosa, whatever they felt more comfortable with. All the questions were however first asked in English than translated to Xhosa to secure understanding. Most of the girls, especially at school A, started out answering in English, but switched to Xhosa at some point. At times during the interviews when the girls either were very eager to share something or at points when they were sad, they all switched to Xhosa.

Moreover, in the classrooms I visited at both school A and B, I witnessed a teaching method that is closely related to the language issue. In many instances, after the teachers have written text on the board, and after the learners have copied the text into their notebooks, all the learners recite the sentences in chorus. Following is a personal observation on this teaching method, observed at school A:

How much do the students learn from writing off the board and saying it loud afterwards? (observation 29.10.2008).

This chorus teaching is referred to as “safe-talk” (Chick 2001) and will be discussed in more depth later on. I will now present the relations between the teachers and the girls I observed at both school A and B.

5.3.5 Interrelations at school

The teachers are both educators and mentors for the girl's. The entire group of girl's mentioned a family member and at least one of their teachers when asked about role models. The teacher's availability and openness towards the girls and their importance in the girl's lives was not difficult to understand hearing how affectionately the girls talked about them. Here are some of the girl's answers about their teachers,

My favorite teacher is my first grade teacher, if I need advice from her I can come and get it, even though she is not my teacher anymore, she is always there for her students (Girl 3 ii 12.11.08).

My favorite teacher is my grade five teacher, because when I needed someone, I could come to her anytime, she is like a mother to me (fg2 11.11.08).

Several of the girls mentioned when we were talking about the teachers that they not only made teaching fun, but also how they helped them and gave them time to understand when something was difficult.

She teaches nice, because she makes you understand (fg1 03.11.08).

One of the attributes the girl's value highest in their teachers is that they are patient and explain everything so everyone understands.

She is my favorite teacher because she is a good person and I want to be like her. Not a teacher, but like the things she does... she makes me feel good about everything... when something bad happens I could go to her and she would help me and advise me what to do (Girl 2 ii 12.11.08).

Despite the high number of learners, approximately 50-60 learners per teacher, the teachers tried to be as attentive as possible to each student. Whenever there was time to spare during the lesson, after using a lot of time writing lessons on the board, the teachers walked around to the learners asking them if they needed help and joking with them. In the focus group interview most of the girls stated that they felt that they received the right amount of attention from their teachers.

However, from an informal talk with Male teacher 2, I got a different view on the issue of overcrowded classrooms when his class went through the homework from the day before.

This assignment was actually not supposed to be homework, but because of the high numbers of learners in class and the crowded space, such an activity is just not possible (Male teacher2 10.11.08).

One girl from school B said during the focus group interview that if the teachers were explaining something in class they would not move forward before they made sure everyone understood.

Each learner is participating because they understand and feel comfortable because they are using their mother tongue (Nonjongo's comment 10.11.08).

One of the most common teaching methods observed was learner's copying text/sentences from the blackboard followed by repeating each sentence aloud, earlier referred to as safe-talk. Another girl told me that the teachers checked if all the learners had understood the lesson by looking in their notebooks. Group work with five or six learners in a group was also a commonly used teaching method. However, Girl 3 felt that sometimes when the teachers reprimanded some of the learners for not doing their work it took a lot of time away from the rest of the class. "It is not fair for the children who are here to learn...sometimes the teachers make examples of the kids that are not behaving, so to show the rest of the class not to do the same thing" (Girl 3 ii 12.11.08). During the second day of observations at school B I witnessed exactly what Girl 3 had told me about how some learners were made examples and the amount of time this sort of discipline took from the rest of the lesson.

The observation was made during an English lesson with Male Teacher 2. He walked around the classroom checking the learner's homework assignment. About 15 of them, both girls and boys had not done the assignment and to punish them he made them stand in the corner of the classroom facing the wall during the rest of the class. "They must be punished or else they will never learn" (Male Teacher2 11.11.08). He believed that the humiliation of being made examples of would be incentive to do their assignments next time. Male Teacher 2 was in my opinion an 'old school' man, showing the learners that he cared about them through 'tough love'. However, encouragement and positive reinforcement from the teachers to the learners was visible all the time at both schools. Through both direct encouragement for instance clapping of hands after an accomplished assignment or through more concealed indirect ways, for instance, through harsh words. The teachers showed the learners how they

believed in them through words of encouragement. Words describing most of the teachers are strict, but loving.

The teacher (Male teacher 2) is so friendly to the learners because he is involved with the difficulties in their lives (Nonjongo's comment 11.11.08).

What scares and upsets the girl's the most are issues relating to their home surroundings and the social setting around the school. School itself seems to be a safe place with good and trusting teacher relationships. However, the dangers of the outside world are never forgotten.

I mostly feel safe at school, but not always. Sometimes when we are alone in the classroom and when the teachers are in a meeting or in the computer room, we are scared that the robbers will come back. Even if we want to go out and buy some fat cookies¹¹, we are not feeling safe at all, because sometimes the robbers can wait outside the gate (fg2 11.11.08).

The robbers sometimes pretend to be parents so they can get into the school...the robbers have guns. If you don't give them something they want, a cell phone or a watch, they will show you their gun and then you get scared of them (fg2 11.11.08).

The school is close to the terminal, or the taxi rank, so when the taxi drivers are fighting it also affects us because we are close to the taxi rank and then we don't feel safe at all (fg1 03.11.08).

I will now turn to the section of the girl's future life, presenting their personal thoughts on how they perceive their future and their subjective perception on what education means for them and what education can help them accomplish further in life.

5.4 Future Life

What is the meaning of education for the girls? Do the girl's aspirations for the future have an impact on their current academic achievement? In this section I will focus on what the girls thought was the meaning of education and the impact they believe it will have on their lives. The essence of this section stems from the focus groups and the individual interviews.

¹¹ A fat cookie could be described as a greas donut with a hamburger inside. It cost about 5R and was sold in the areas surrounding each school.

5.4.1 Thoughts on school

Being able to get an education and go to school has high value for the girls and it seems that they are grateful for the opportunity of being in school.

Education is important because if you don't have education you have nothing... it will change your life because education opens doors to your future. I have learned a lot from school, because before, I couldn't count, but now math is fun (fg2 11.11.08).

I am proud to be at school, it is the right place to be. Many children are on the streets and not in school. They are unhappy and do not want to be on the streets, but have to because of the situation they are in (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08).

Another girl says that being in school and getting good marks makes her happy and proud. School is perceived from the girls' perspective as a necessary place to be if you want a chance to build your life and learning to master the English language was mentioned as one of the benefits of going to school.

If you are at home and not in school you can't even speak English, because at home you are just talking in Xhosa (fg1 03.11.08).

As mentioned earlier in chapter two, it seems that the focus on the ability to master English has transferred from the teachers to the girls. Another issue that is often mentioned by the girls as a benefit of schooling is knowledge to help them cope with realities they face in their everyday lives.

At school you learn new things, especially about HIV and Aids. Many people lack knowledge about HIV and Aids. Being at school we learn more to protect us from the disease (fg1 03.11.08).

Furthermore, through the History and Xhosa lessons the girls are able to learn more about their history, culture and background which is essential for some of the girls.

...maybe your grandmother was working and her boss struggled to pronounce her surname... by listening to and learning history, you find out why her boss gave her a new surname, the one you have know (Girl 4 fg1 11.11.08).

Being in school has changed the girls for the better they tell me. Several of them mentioned that they have higher self confidence and believed more in themselves now than they did before. The girls have been taught to take responsibility for their actions and to stand up for themselves.

...the teachers teach me how I must behave (fg2 11.11.08).

...being here at school, I learned more things as compared to if I were in the township all the time (fg2 11.11.08).

... like being at school, I learned that you must think about yourself and that you are as good as others. And I also learned things I need for my future (fg2 11.11.08).

I learned that it is important not only to be beautiful on the outside, but also on the inside (Girl 3 ii 12.11.08).

When it comes to school and the future most of the girls seem to believe that they can accomplish anything they want by working hard and believing in themselves. All of them have great dreams and aspirations for the future, which I will turn to next.

5.4.2 Envisioning the future

All the girls have big dreams and great aspirations for the future. In ten years time all the girls envision themselves being successful career women.

I will be a lawyer, because I want to protect people who are in trouble, but haven't done anything wrong (fg2 11.11.08).

I want to be a doctor because I want to make the number of people dying in hospital to go down. Doctors help people survive, and live. I want to be one of them (fg2 11.11.08).

I want to be a scientist...I want to test the drinking water and make sure it is safe to drink (fg1 03.11.08).

I would like to be a singer, actress and a social worker. I really want to be a social worker because I can give people advice on their problems and I could try to help them because I don't like to see people in pain... I try my best to help. I would like to be a singer because I think my voice is beautiful so I make a lot of music that I listen to all the time, I sing too. I like to watch 'Generations' and want to be a television star, like the people on the show (Girl 3 ii 12.11.08).

I want to be a computer scientist, a person that works with computers. I like computers because the banks are using computers and then I can work at the bank if I know how to use a computer (fg2 11.11.08).

These were some of the responses when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. When the girls were asked to imagine how their lives would be in ten years time almost all of them mentions that they will be rich so they can support their parents and families. The common thread for all the girls seems to be that they all strive towards

something/somewhere better than what they have now. Their career goals and ambitions for the future are somehow related to previous experiences, either something that they personally experienced or someone close to them has experienced.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter I have given the reader a glimpse into the everyday lives of the girls investigated. The effects of poverty, crime, violence and the widespread use of drugs and alcohol are all factors that the girls have to deal with on a regular basis. Their social and family situations are different from the “nuclear family”, with many of the girls experiencing parents being absent either physically and mentally. However, all the girls have people they look up to and admire within their close environment. The physical school buildings the girls attend in many ways reflect the poverty of the township they are situated in. Challenges caused by lack of teaching materials and the difficulties from using a LOI that is neither the teachers nor the girls mother tongue are also visible in the classrooms. However, the girls obtain hope and have a strong belief in the idea of education, which will override the many obstacles they are burdened with.

In the following chapter I will analyze and discuss the raw data presented here and try to look at these findings in relation to the theoretical concepts and framework introduced earlier. Applying the theoretical concept of empowerment in light of education for girls, together with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) EST, Nuttin’s (1985) FTP and UNICEF’s (2002) “quality” indicators I will attempt to understand the lives of these girls living in the context of poverty, violence and hope and thus hopefully answer the main objective of this thesis. By looking at the findings together with the theory I will decontextualize it, although not necessarily generalize, but look at the main findings from another angle and in turn hopefully understand the meaning that lies behind the girl’s responses.

6. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the main findings presented in the previous chapter based on the background and the theoretical framework presented in chapter two and three, attempting to answer the main research question of this study: *Is Education a tool of Empowerment for girls?*

Many factors come into play when attempting to answer a complex and multifaceted question, as my research question, and to be able to answer it comprehensively one needs to investigate the topic from different angles. I will look at contextual factors that may hinder or enhance development which in turn affects the degree to which ability education enhance empowerment or not. I will use Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST to lay the foundation for this discussion. By connecting the main findings into the different levels of the system with the main issues drawn from the conceptual and theoretical framework, I will attempt to give the reader an overview of all the different aspects involved, putting the pieces of the puzzle together. Summing up the discussion, I will collect all the points throughout the discussion in answering the main research question. Although prior to placing the main findings in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, a brief recapitulation of the concept of empowerment will be presented, followed by a recapitulation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, including an explanation for why I have chosen to place the different findings in the different levels of his model.

6.1 Review of the empowerment concept

As stated earlier the use of the concept of empowerment varies from both the context and the field of research in which it is being used. As other authors using the term, I too have operationalized the concept to best suit the purpose of this research. The interpretation of empowerment that is best suited for this thesis and the sample of girls that took part in the study is a combination of Stomquist's (1993), Rowland's (1995), Zimmerman's (1995) and McWhirther's (1991) interpretations of the concept.

Stromquist (1993) describes four elements which she believes need to be present for an empowerment process to take place; cognitive, psychological, economic and political. In this discussion I choose to focus on the cognitive and the psychological elements of her theory. The cognitive element stresses that one needs to understand and realize one's own subordination and actively acquire the suited knowledge/tools needed to change one's subordinated position. The psychological element of Stromquist's (1993) theory involves the gaining of self-esteem and confidence and that one feels in control of one's life. Zimmerman (1995) as well discusses the aspect of psychological empowerment (PE), which is similar to Stromquist's (1993) idea. He states that PE entails the belief that goals can be achieved and awareness about the resources that hinder or enhance one's chance to fulfil those goals. The two other elements of Stromquist's (1993) theory which I do not focus on are the economic and political aspects. Even though envisioning economic empowerment in the future, through the girls' dreams of well paid jobs, the aspect of this and political awareness does not directly involve the girls at their current stage in life. This would instead require a longitudinal study of the girls over a long period of time, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Of Rowland's (1995) three dimensions of how empowerment can be experienced (personal, relational and collective), it is her dimension of personal empowerment which is best suited for my sample of girls at the present time in their lives. Empowerment on a personal level entails developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, which is similar to Stromquist (1993) and Zimmerman's (1995) aspect of PE. The aspect of relational and collective empowerment will hopefully be a product of their personal empowerment. After breaking down all the definitions of empowerment mentioned above to best suit my case, I find McWhirther's (1991) differentiation of what she calls the "situation of empowerment" and an "empowering situation" to be quite appropriate for this thesis. I will later on discuss whether or not the education the girls receive is an "empowering situation".

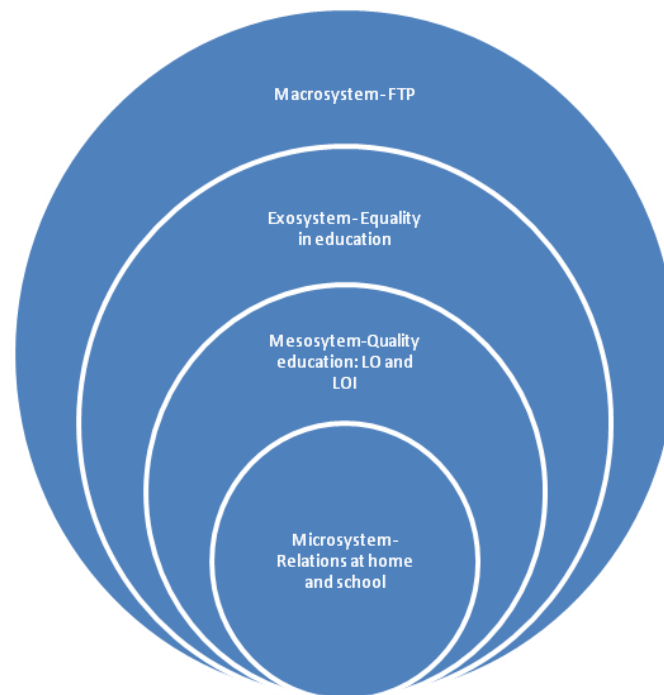
Despite the many definitions and different areas of use, one common aspect of the empowerment concept is that it most often starts at the individual level, and then it effects and expands to higher levels of society. As the ecological system theory, the empowerment process can therefore be seen as an interactive process, where all elements are part of a larger system, which influence each other. For instance, the empowerment process is initiated at individual level, within a person (in the microsystem). The newly gained power, either with

psychological, cognitive, economic or political aspects will hopefully have rippling affects onto the other areas in life, and members of the family/community (in the exosystem). The girls participating in the Shonglap project in Bangladesh is a concrete example of this and illustrates how empowerment is both a process and product (Strømme Foundation 2009). The ecological system theory shows that all elements of life are connected, the individual and the society, micro-level and macro level, are interconnected and affect each other. Prior to the discussion using the ecological system theory a short run through and a visualisation of the system theory is now presented.

6.2 Review of the Ecological System Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) believes that the social setting surrounding a child during his/her childhood and adolescent years affects that child's development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) divides his system into four nested layers, all of which are somehow connected to the child's life, directly or indirectly. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Garbarino (1985) use the term 'optimal development' for a development which they believe best equip the child/adolescent to achieve his/hers fullest potential, socially and academically. Figure 6.1 below illustrates how I intend to use Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model in practice and which of the main findings will be discussed at each level.

Figure 6.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System with main findings



The objectives of this study concentrates mainly on how the girl's experience their school and home situation, which I place in the micro- and meso level of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model and which will be the largest area of discussion. The primary relations of the girls in their home and school situation is placed and discussed in the microsystem. The school findings, together with the contextual and theoretical framework, are placed and discussed in the mesosystem. Even though the mesosystem is the interrelations/connection between a child's different microsystems, I have chosen to place these findings here because I believe it best suits the discussion. In the exosystem a short discussion on individual school policy will be presented, including a brief look at the decentralized educational system, which effects the equality in the education the girls receive. In the macrosystem, the girls own thoughts for the future will be discussed in light of the Nuttin's (1985) FTP.

6.3 Primary relations-Microsystem

According to UNICEF, (2002) positive childhood experiences are important in a child's success in school, where families and social surroundings play a key role in providing these experiences. In order to achieve academically, children must participate consistently in school, a factor which is also determined by the family and the social surroundings of the

child. In other words, it means that nurturing and safe environments enhance academic achievement (UNICEF 2002). My intention and idea behind using this system theory is based on UNICEF's vision that optimal development, including safe environments and trusting relationships, leads to a good foundation for learning. In turn, I believe that if the learning that takes place is quality learning and the setting where the learning occurs is in a safe environment with trusting relations, then learning can lead to empowerment in the sense that it is an empowering situation. Below is a figure (Fig. 6.2) illustrating my idea of how optimal development circumstances at home and school in addition to quality education at school leads to an empowering situation.

Figure 6.2 Interpretation of what leads to an empowering situation



To gain optimal development a child needs safe and trusting relationships within their microsystem with people that see and hear the child and their needs. Do the girls have such trusting relationships within their home? What are the implications if this is not present? Do the girls have trusting relations at school? Can possible trusting relations at school compensate for the lack of this at home?

6.3.1 The girls primary relations at home

Recalling the story of Girl 3 living with an alcoholic mother, one would question whether or not this mother is capable of creating such a safe relationship with her daughter. The home situation for this girl was apparently so difficult that her two younger sisters were removed from the home by child protective services, and her older sister moved to their grandmother's home. The only reason Girl 3 could stay at home with her parents, was because she was over twelve years old at the time and had the right to choose to stay. How safe can this girl feel at home? Do the parents of this girl see and hear her? She might have to take on more responsibilities than what a thirteen year old girl should, and at the same time she carries

with her the shame of her mother's illness. She is also torn between the unconditional love she has for her mother and the need to protect her.

When (Girl 3) was telling us about her family and home situation she became very upset and started to cry (personal notes from ii 12.11.08).

According to Garbarino (1985), to obtain optimal development the relationships in the system need to be in balance, an equilibrium in which the individual's needs and interests are taken care of. He states that emotional confirmation and intellectual stimulation must be present for this relationship to affect the child positively. Does Girl 3 receive this?

According to Shonkoff and colleagues (2000) a child's development is influenced by a caregiver's behaviour and characteristics and by the intrinsic temperament of the child. However, the caregiver's behaviour is a stronger component in the relationship than the child's intrinsic temperament (Shonkoff et al. 2000). For a caregiver to contribute to promote healthy child development, the circumstances presented by the caregiver must be of a warm, nurturing, reliable and stable nature. Some of the reasons for why a caregiver is not able to provide these safe settings might be inexperience, low educational attainment, or mental health problems related to substance abuse, family violence or economic stress (Shonkoff et al. 2000). These factors are individual factors that influence a child's development. However, the community, the neighbourhood and the social surroundings of the child also play a part in a child's development.

The lack of equilibrium which is needed to sustain the individual's needs and interest within the microsystem concerning the home relations is unfortunately visible in several of the girls' stories. For instance, Girl 4 experienced her fathers' leaving her mother as a personal rejection of her as a person.

I think my father hates me (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08).

Garbarino (1985), states that rejection, especially from a parent is one of the most damaging factors for optimal development within the microsystem. "Across cultures rejection is a kind of emotional malignancy that eats away at the individual's capacity for self-esteem, social competence and hope" (Rohner 1975 cited in Garbarino 1985:56). In the case of both Girl 3 and Girl 4 there is according to Garbarino (1985), a risk that the balance in these relationships are in the child's disfavour, since both the girls experience their parents

somehow mistreat their children's guilt feelings. Girl 3 in the sense that she is 'alone' with her mother's illness, and for Girl 4 it is present from listening to her talk about her father, through her mother's words.

Recalling the story of Girl 1, who is an orphan and is under the charge and supervision of her nineteen year old sister and her fifteen year old brother, one may wonder where the safety net is for this girl. Is she seen and heard? Does this little family consisting of three siblings under twenty years old, manage to support each other in such a way that they all obtain optimal development? I do not know anything about the support system around these siblings, however, I got the impression from the interview with Girl 1 that her home life is filled with challenges, economically and in other ways particularly for the older siblings. Girl 2 is the only one out of the four girls who has the largest contact network around her. Even though she does not live with her parents and siblings, they are all alive and are working. She is surrounded by many relatives and adults that hopefully see and hear her.

Unfortunately, I only talked to these girls twice, and during the process of writing this thesis, many more questions have come up. In retrospect I wish I had the time and opportunity to have asked the girls more questions relating to their personal stories and gotten to know them better. However, I have to work with what information I did collect. The following paragraph captures some aspects of the knowledge I gathered.

Girl 3's relationship with her father is an example. She only mentions him in relation to where he works, and she does not mention how her relationship with him is. However, she does mention that she has a very good neighbour that sometimes give her food when there is none at home. Girl 4's description of the relationship with her mother suggests that she feels bad for her mother because her father has left them. Girl 4 also mentions her aunt as one of the people that care for her the most and that she gives her food and clothes when her mother cannot afford it. What implications will the lack of a safe relationship with both parents have on the girls is hard to predict, but according to Garbarino (1985) rejection and a lack of balance in the relationship between the child and their primary relations are risk factors that might hinder optimal development.

It is fair to say that none of the four girls has the most optimal home situation, since they all struggle with different problems with varying degrees of risk factors. They all have in

common the fact that they live in a community lurking with dangers such as crime, violence and substance abuse, which ultimately affects them in one way or another.

I am not safe at home because my neighbor is dealing and doing drugs (Girl 1 ii 04.11.08).

The question is: Are the difficulties that the girl's experience in their everyday lives a hindrance for their educational outcome in the context of empowerment? I will return to the social surroundings of the girls later on in the text. I will now continue to discuss the girls' relationships with their teachers. According to Garbarino (1985), a product of a healthy microsystem can come from how a child deals with enlarging and widening systems, for instance starting school, which all my girls have managed quite well, despite challenging home situations.

6.3.2 The girls relations with their teachers

As discussed, a balance is needed between a child and his/her relations within the microsystem in order to obtain optimal development, this need for equilibrium should be present between the child and their teacher. Are Garbarino's (1985) criteria for optimal development such as emotional confirmation and intellectual stimulation present between the girls and their teachers? The stories told to me by the girls and the classroom observations I conducted lead me to conclude that Garbarino's (1985) criteria are present. When they are in trouble or in need of advice, all the girls have talked to a teacher, either a former or a present teacher at one point. The teachers they talk to are all females and are seen as role models for the girls, people that they look up to and admire. As girl 2 said during the individual interview:

...she (the teacher) is a good person and I want to be like her. Not a teacher, but like the things she does... she makes me feel good about everything... when something bad happens I could go to her and she would help me and advise me what to do (Girl 2 ii 04.11.08).

According to Unterhalter (1999), the women she interviewed who in some ways had an absent mother, either physically or mentally, told her about female teachers who had become a surrogate mother figure for them. The women in Unterhalter's (1999) study who lacked a mother and thus became close to a female teacher, were the ones who said that going to school was an empowering situation for them. It was not so much the educational content

these women referred to, but the life skills they had learned through the warm relationship with these female teachers. I believe a line of resemblance can be drawn here between my girls and the women in Unterhalter's (1999) study. The following quote is a girl's respond to my question whether she had a favourite teacher:

Yes, my grade 5 teacher, because if I needed someone, I could come to her anytime. She is like a mother to me (fg2 11.11.08).

The teachers made learning understandable for the girls, they all told me. According to Rogers (1969), three factors must be present between the teacher and the learner so that 'significant learning' can take place. One of these factors is that the learner must perceive that the teacher takes his/her feelings and opinions seriously. This factor I believe is present for the girls. As mentioned, they all shared with me that they felt comfortable talking to their teachers, either the teachers they have now or teachers they used to have, when they have a problem.

Recalling the story Male Teacher 2 told me about the girl that had turned to prostitution, and how the girls trusted him enough with this information, might be seen as an example of Rogers (1969) factor being present in the educational content. Another factor which Rogers (1969) set as a criterion for significant learning is that the learners perception of their teachers as real people, imperfect and with flaws of their own.

Furthermore, a fundamental concept in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem is that the child sees himself/herself as a meaningful person engaging in what the child experiences as meaningful activities. At school the girls all see their role there as meaningful and they all perceive school as a meaningful place to be in accordance with their thought for the future.

Moreover, another important aspect to point out, in regard to the Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem, is that the girls feel safe at school. In contrast to being afraid of the "outside world" criminals, the girls all feel safe when they are in school. Some feel even safer in school than they do at home. According to the Human Rights Watch (2001) there are many cases of sexual violence towards girls in South African schools. Violence targets the girls and come from both male teachers and male learners. From what I understand from the interviews with the girls is that they have never experienced violence of any kind, sexual or otherwise, at the schools they attend. According to Rogers (1969) all people have an internal motivation for learning and this motivation is the tendency towards self-actualization.

However, he continues to state that internal motivation will not be promoted within the learner if the classroom and the teacher do not make the classroom feel like a safe place.

In the following section, I will discuss the link between the home and school environment, in addition to the discussing some of the aspects which UNICEF (2002) includes in their concept of “quality education”.

6.4 Quality education-Mesosystem

The mesosystem entails the linking together of multiple microsystems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasises that one of the criteria for optimal development is a smooth transition between these two systems, which seems to be present in reference to home and school. The home area and the schools are located in the same township and through my fieldwork I came to understand that the two institutions share the same values and ideologies.

6.4.1 The link between the home and the school setting

The communities, in which the girls live, the townships of Khayelitsha and Nyanga, are filled with danger such as high crime rate, violence, drugs and alcohol abuse. As already mentioned, all the girls are affected by this to some degree, but some more than others.

A child’s social surroundings impact a child’s development, which in turn coincides with a child’s educational development (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Garbarino 1985). The girls I interviewed are all individuals at risk in relation to their social surroundings. Will these girls have a chance to develop optimally and achieve academic success despite these risk factors? Some children who grow up under difficult circumstances develop a resilience to cope with negative factors present in their primary and secondary environments according to Klefbeck and Ogden (2005). In other words, these children manage well in life despite a difficult childhood environment. According to Nordahl (2005) these children who manage to do well despite psychological or physical distress in their upbringing, often relate to positive experiences in meeting with a teacher, when questioned why and how they managed to do well. These teachers did not take over the parent role, but are a stable and important role

model for them, respecting them and gave them the opportunity to believe in themselves and their abilities.

When a child is exposed to risk factors in the home environment, it is extremely important that the school does not become an additional factor which promotes negative development. According to Nordahl (2005) the risk factors that may be present in a school environment are identified as; “classroom teaching without any structure, bad relationships between the learner and the teacher, conflict embossed classroom environments, unclear rules and bad relations between the home and the school” (Nordahl 2005:111). The physical state of the school, however, does not appear to be linked with risk factor for development. The physical state of the schools, which the girls attend are of varying character. Broken windows, doors which do not fit into the door frame are some examples of this, however, the importance of these factors are less than the pedagogical and social frameworks mentioned above according to Nordahl (2005). When a child is exposed to risk factors at home, school can in some cases be what Nordahl (2005) refers to as a “protective factor”, which can create the balance a child needs and reduce the chance of negative development. In the case of my girls, I believe this to be correct.

I will continue to discuss the pedagogical content of the subject of Life Orientation and the issue of Language of Instruction.

6.4.2 Valuable life skills, Life Orientation

Within the issue of educational content which was investigated in the previous chapter, emphasis was put on the subject of LO. In accordance with the psychological aspect of the empowerment concept, I believe this subject is in many ways the most important for the girls. First off is the issue of HIV/Aids. According to UNICEF, South Africa is the country in the world which is most affected by HIV. Out of the about 49 million citizen's, approximately 5.5 million people are currently living with HIV (CIA 2009). Most of those who are affected are women of child- bearing age. There are many controversial wrong beliefs about how the disease spreads and how to get well from it. One of these beliefs is that you can get cured from the HIV virus if you have sex with a virgin. Because of this belief many girls are afraid of and exposed to sexually related crime.

The LO subject is chosen to be the content of the curriculum given most attention throughout this section due to the powerful messages that it can convey, if taught properly and if the girls are receptive to the information. However, numbers show that even though girls and young women are given the appropriate knowledge about HIV, safe sex etc., they do not practice what they are taught (Baxen and Breidlid 2009).

In the case of school A's reading book of the year, Whitney's Kiss, the girls are given an example of how a girl very similar to themselves learns to handle prejudice from her friends and classmate when her father is diagnosed with HIV, and how she with the help of her teacher finds the strength to stand up for herself towards her boyfriend who is pressuring her for sex. The book's message mirrors the values which UNICEF (2002) emphasizes as one of the key ingredients to an educational content of good quality. In addition, the fact that the reading book is studied both in English and Xhosa, to ensure the girls understanding of the message, reflects another one of UNICEF's criteria for content of quality.

These life skills will enable the girls to better apply their knowledge throughout their lives. According to Carl Rogers (1969) learning is most effective when the learner can relate to the content on a personal level. Although none of the girls I talked to had any direct experience with the disease,¹² they were all aware of its dangers and consequences. Rogers (1969) states that the best learning occurs if the girls can relate to the subject matter of teaching. I imagine children experiencing drug and alcohol abuse, absent parents, crime and violence regularly would be receptive to education teaching them about the dangers of such activities and the consequences that may follow. I believe that when children are familiar with a world filled with social problems as crime, violence, drugs and alcohol their motivation to change might be high.

Moreover, knowledge becomes intrinsic if the learner is involved in the decision making regarding the learning material. The sex-education posters that hung on the walls in the school B classroom were all made by the learners in cooperation with the teachers.

¹² Although none of the girls admitted that they had any personal experience with the disease, it is possible to speculate, given the high rate of infection especially among the black population in South Africa, that they have been in some way affected. For instance, they might have lost a relative or closed family friend to the disease. Also given the fact that there is a wall of silence and denial about HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Baxen and Breidlid 2009) these girls might not have direct knowledge of how the pandemic has affected them.

According to UNICEF (2002), for the education to become “quality education” for girls the educational content must be gender sensitive. The message from the book *Whitney’s Kiss* is very much gender sensitive showing a girl that is strong in addition to stand up for herself.

I believe that the educational content of LO teaches the girls not only practical information¹³ but also confidence and provides them with a positive self-esteem. I will now turn to the section of language of instruction and ask the question of how well the educational content is understood and internalized if one is taught in a language that not all of them comprehend that well.

6.4.3 Learning in a language which is not your own

Do the schools truly provide equal educational opportunities to the multi-lingual learners, who do not have English as their mother tongue, when English is being used as the LOI? How high is the girls’ proficiency in English? How well do they understand and are able to internalize the educational content if they are not good in English?

During classrooms observation I noticed that even though the lesson was supposed to be conducted in English, Xhosa was frequently used.

Learners seem to only speak in English when talking aloud in class, when answering questions from the teachers. Otherwise, the language spoken is Xhosa between each other and in informal talks with the teachers. However, when they do speak English, in formal response, they several times switch to Xhosa in the middle of sentences. The learners do this often when they do not find the word they are looking for in English. The teacher usually replied in Xhosa as well (observations 31.10.08).

The teaching methods used in the classrooms I observed also reflect the fact that the English proficiency was not that high. Copying text from the board and repeating it in chorus, is referred to as safe talk (Chick 2001). This type of teaching method limits the learner’s capacity to think for themselves and is the opposite of what Rogers (1969) calls child-centred

¹³ Baxen and Breidlid (2009) point out, however, that information is not necessarily enough to change behaviour and more importantly it is the kind of information that is passed on, which is equally important. According to these researchers information about HIV/AIDS needs to be integrated with the indigenous knowledge of the community and not necessarily glossy high profile middle class oriented campaigns such as the Love-Life campaign in South Africa. The use of a book like *Whitney’s Kiss* may be the kind of knowledge that Baxen and Breidlid (2009) are calling for in teaching youth in such contexts as the one discussed in this thesis.

education. As Cummins (2000) points out, learning academic content while and at the same time learning the language of instruction (LOI) is not without difficulties.

Another example of the low English abilities among the girls was visible for me during the interview sessions I had with them. As mentioned earlier all the questions I asked was first asked in English then translated to Xhosa by my research assistant. The girls' English capacity varied of course, some could make themselves understood more easily than others, but for the most part they all answered the questions in Xhosa when the answer was longer than "yes" or "no". However, they all tried to speak English with me, perhaps to show me that they could.

English is perceived as a power language, even though only 5 % of the country's population has this as their mother tongue. Why English is being used as LOI may reflect the social and economic power of English. The aspirations of the school communities is emphasised rather than the language proficiency of the girls, many of whom have little exposure to English outside the classroom and who do not achieve the threshold level of English language proficiency for effective learning across the curriculum (UNICEF 2009a).

Language is the base for all other learning areas. If one does not fully comprehend the language one is being taught in, one consequently will not understand the content being taught. With that in mind, is access to school 'meaningful access' if one does not understand what is being taught?

As mentioned, a common teaching method observed involves copying text from the board into notebooks and repeating text out loud in chorus, which reflects Freire's (1972) 'banking concept' of education. His criticism towards traditional education is where the teacher "fills the students by making deposits of information which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge" (Freire 1985:57). This teaching method was also used in 'Bantu Education' during apartheid (Holmarsdottir 2005). However, the main difference between the teaching method then and now is the intention behind it. Under apartheid it was used as means of oppression, (see quote from 2.3.2) while now, when all learners are to become "free-thinking", independent and democratic individuals, it is partly used due to lack of teaching materials available and most likely language limitations from both teachers and learners.

Rogers (1979) criticises the educational practices of his time when saying that they are rigid, and he states the need for a new and improved learning method that will enhance the capacity of the single learner to task with the obstacles and challenges of tomorrow. Comparing Rogers' thoughts about his past and his present is suitable for a comparison of South Africa pre- and post-apartheid.

As mentioned earlier the teachers frequently switch from English to Xhosa in the classroom, and, I do not believe that the girls would acquire much knowledge, and internalize that knowledge, if it was not for the use of Xhosa for explanation of the lessons.

... if the teacher is explaining something, she doesn't go forward without making sure that all the learners understand. All of the teachers do this (fg2 11.12.08).

Even though educational outcomes, in form of national exam results might not be very high (UNICEF 2009a), I believe that the girls understand and internalize the educational content, as a result of their teachers consequently explain the content in Xhosa. The use and importance of Xhosa as a language of communication in township schools in South Africa is also documented in research by Holmarsdottir (2005). The study by Holmarsdottir (2005) points out that the code-switching taking place between English and Xhosa provide student with access to the curriculum, which they might not have if English only is used as a means of communication.

In the following section I will briefly discuss how the decentralized school system affects the different educational content at each school.

6.5 Equality in education-Exosystem

The decentralization of the school system in South Africa was implemented to give each province, community and individual school more freedom to choose their own ways to convey the message of the national curriculum (DoE 1996a). Carrim (2001) refers to this educational freedom as "participatory democracy" (Carrim 2001 cited in Biseth 2005: 4). In addition, the decentralization of the education system made the country able to show more of its multicultural side than during apartheid. Carrim (2001) refers to this aspect of the implementation of the decentralized educational system as "increased representation"

(Carrim 2001 cited in Biseth 2005: 4). The affects of such a system creates differences and unfortunately not all of them in a positive way.

The language issue is one example of the negative effects of the decentralized education system. Although according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) all girls have the right to education in the language they prefer, out of the eleven official languages (RSA1996), although this is not always a reality. At the two schools I visited for instance the majority of the girls and the teachers had Xhosa as their mother tongue, the language of instruction however, was English. One of the reasons for this was that the teachers viewed the English language as one of the most relevant keys to “making it” in the outside world. During an informal talk I had with Male teacher 2, this point was raised. The notion that English is a necessity to “making it” in the world is seen through the words of the girls as well.

...after your studies you are looking for a job and then, there is no job that you can get without English (Girl 1 ii 04.11.08).

As mentioned earlier, due to the decentralized educational system of South African, several stakeholders have a say in the decision making concerning the education. Some of these stakeholders are the provincial school system and the local school board including educators and parents of the learner (DoE 1996b). An example of how different schools choose different channels to convey a message can be seen through the choice of having a reading book for the year. At school A, the grade 7 teachers, as mentioned earlier, had chosen “Whitney’s Kiss” as the reading book for the year and through it illustrating the dangers, challenges and the stigmatisations which rise from HIV. The learners read and discussed this book both in the Xhosa and in the English class. When I asked Male Teacher 2 at school B if they had such a reading book he replied that they did not and that it was not compulsory from the Department of Education (DoE) for the following year.

Moreover, Male teacher 2 informed me about the assessment of the learners.

Frames or suggestions for assessment are set by the Department (DoE), but at the end of the day it is up to each school to have the final say. I have personally made the assessment criteria for this year (in the subject of English), and I am the one that sets their mark (Informal talk with Male teacher2 12.11.08).

I asked the girls at school A about the schools' reading book of the year during the focus group interview and my interpretation from their responses led me to the understanding that the girls all identified with the character in "Whitney's Kiss". Even though none of them had experienced HIV on a personal level, I draw from their responses that they internalized the message. Following are a set of responses the girls shared with me about the book:

We learn many things from reading the book, things like when you have HIV or Aids, how to live with it and how it affects your friends and family (fg1 03.11.08).

We have learned not to do things that can make us sick, from what we have read in the book about Whitney (fg1 03.11.08).

An interesting question to pose is how much of the individual differences in the content at each school affect the child's educational outcome? Do the girls at school A get a better understanding of the dangers and effects of HIV compared to the girls at school B, that did not read "Whitney's Kiss"?

Decisions made by the teachers and the school board regarding what and how the educational content at their school is communicated, directly affects the child in terms of the individual child's educational outcome and knowledge base. I will now turn to the fourth system of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory, namely the macrosystem, which similar to happenings in the exosystem affects the child and his/her educational outcome.

6.6 The future- Macrosystem

The macrosystem according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model entails broad ideology, laws and customs of one's culture, sub-culture and social class. However, in keeping with the main objective of this thesis, I will not set out to discuss the political and ideological systems of South Africa and the world. I shall use this section to emphasize the girls' own perception of their education and how they believe it is a catalyst to change for their own lives towards the future. Given the extent and nature of my data, such a discussion in my view will be the best suited in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) macrosystem. (1979).

The most important aspect in the empowerment process is that it must start from within the specific individual. It may start with a wish and a dream for change. One of the most striking

examples of this from the outside world, which refers to the historical background of the concept reviewed in the beginning of this thesis, is linked to the fight for freedom and equal rights which played out during the civil rights movement among African Americans in the 1960's, and highlighted in Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech.

According to Nuttin (1985) the way in which one perceives one's future is a determinant on how one behaves in the present moment. The girls from both school A and B envision a future brighter and better than the world they live in and experience today. The girls all want a change in their lives, all dreaming of a better life for themselves and their families. In other words, to teach the girl's new ways of living (e.g. sex education or HIV/Aids information) would be a process of empowerment, where the girls themselves crave information to change, and by attending school and getting an education, they believe change is possible. In FTP it is not the goal itself, for instance the career, that activates behavior, but the anticipation of it that 'causes' behavior (Nuttin 1985).

Below are some examples of how the girls perceive their education and believe it will be meaningful for the lives:

Education is important because if you don't have education you have nothing... it will change your life because education opens door to your future (fg2 11.11.08).

At school you learn new things, especially about HIV and Aids. Many people lack knowledge about HIV and Aids. Being at school we learn more to protect us from the disease (fg1 03.11.08).

From learning valuable life skills, the girls may be able, as UNICEF (2002) envisions when using the term "quality education", to pass their educational knowledge onto their children, the next generation of South Africans. Studies show that educated mothers have healthier children and better educated children (Save the Children 2005, UNICEF 2004). Another outcome of individual development is community and national development, which one could call the product of empowerment.

In some of the replies the girls gave me during the interviews on what they want to be when they grow up, I see that their dreams entail change from the life they know today. Below are some examples of this:

I would like to be a singer, actress and a social worker. I really want to be a social worker because I can give people advice on their problems and I could try to help them (Girl 3 ii 12.11.08).

I want to be a scientist...I want to test the drinking water and make sure it is safe to drink (fg1 03.11.08).

I want to be a doctor because I want to make the number of people dying in hospital to go down. Doctors help people survive, and live. I want to be one of them (fg2 11.11.08).

As mentioned earlier and which I highly believe in, it is that how one views the future that is both highly relevant and of prime importance for school achievement (Andriessen et al. 2004). "Students who believe that doing well in school is instrumental for their future careers are more successful in school" (Andriessen et al. 2004:64). One can say that the girls investigated in this study can be compared to the "minority" children in Andriessen and colleagues' study (2004). In the following section I briefly sum up this discussion and with that attempt to answer the main question of this thesis.

6.7 Summing up: Is education a tool of empowerment?

In light of my operationalization and the definitions of the empowerment concept discussed, I believe three elements need to be present to be able to evaluate education's role in the empowerment process, as previously mentioned in the introduction. First off, a certain degree of "quality" needs to be present in the pedagogical framework in the educational arena. This framework includes both the educational content and how the content is structured. Secondly, the girls need to be receptive to learning and have the capacity to absorb and understand the education. The third element, entails that the girls can make use of the knowledge they have internalized, and use it as a vehicle for change positive for themselves, their families and the society. I believe that if the answers to these three questions are yes, then one can state that education can be used as a tool of empowerment.

First to the question of quality, it seems that the girls are equipped with knowledge that is relevant and valuable for their position in life and which is suited the environment they live in, in relation to content. The content is gender sensitive and context related, in line with the national and international goals targeting girls. On the other hand, the issue of in which form the message is conveyed, I believe could be better. I think that the girls might benefit even

more if they received education in a language that they were more comfortable/ familiar with. However, since the content is explained to them in their mother tongue, I believe the girls do understand and may internalize the content. In addition, some of the teaching methods at the schools, in my opinion might not be the best, however, the social and economic conditions surrounding the schools play a role in this and the teachers and the schools make the most of the “little” they have.

Second is the question of receptiveness. Despite what one might call negative circumstances, it seems that the girls are receptive to the information they are given at school, and that they have, at the stage in life where they are now, internalized the life skills they are taught. Third is the aspect of how they can make use of the knowledge in a bigger picture. In accordance with the dreams and hopes the girls have for the future and the stories they share with me about the lessons they have learned in school, it might be possible to assume that the girls will be able to put the knowledge they have internalized to good use.

In my view, education is an important tool of empowerment for the girls in this study. The importance of the education for these girls is significant and perhaps even more so given the situation they are in and the negative life circumstances they experience. The process and product of education as empowerment is more relevant for the girls I talked to than it might be for girls say from Norway who have all the possibilities handed to them at birth, opportunities and options the girls in this thesis long after. I believe that the less one has to begin with the farther the road is to success and thus the more important education is.

I would like to end this thesis with a quote from one of the four girls which I was lucky enough to get to know. The underlying attitude this quote represents were shared by all the girls, and is a powerful statement of their belief in a better future. The quote is short:

Education is everything; it is the key to success (Girl 4 ii 12.11.08)

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Appendices

- A. Time of Interviews and Observations
- B. Interview guide for Focus Group
- C. Interview guide for Individual Interviews
- D. Informed consent forms for Interviews
- E. Summary of Whitney's Kiss from school A
- F. Life Orientation poster information from school B

Appendix A Times of Interviews and Observations

Tuesday October 28th 2008- Observations at school A

Wednesday October 29th 2008- Observations at school A

Friday October 31st 2008 – Observations at school A

Monday November 3rd 2008- Focus Group Interview at school A

Tuesday November 4th 2008- Individual Interviews at school A

Monday November 10th 2008- Observations at school B

Tuesday November 11th 2008- Observations and Focus Group Interviews at school B

Wednesday November 12th 2008- Observations and Individual Interviews at school B

Appendix B Interview Guide for Focus Group

Everyday life

- I have been in your classrooms for three days and seen a little bit of how your school days are- but if I was a fly on the wall for a whole year, would I see anything different?
- What are the best things you know about going to school? B) Why?
- What is your favorite subject in school? B) Why?
- Do you have a favorite teacher? B) What does she/he do that makes her/him your favorite?
- Has anything bad happened to you or anyone you know at school, maybe in the bathroom or outside when the teachers were not there? B) What sort of bad things?
- Do you have any stories that you could tell me so I can understand how it is to be a girl at this school ?

School culture

- When you think of school, what words would you choose to describe it?
- How does being at school make you feel inside?
- What is it like being a girl at this school?
- Do you think that boys and girls are treated differently in any way? B) How are you treated differently?
- When you are at school, do you feel safe? B) How?
- Have there been any times in school that made you feel scared or afraid?

Meaning of education-Future

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- This is your last year in Primary school and after Christmas you are starting Secondary school. Are you all starting Secondary school? B) How do you think that will be? Maybe you know someone that is in Secondary school that has told you something about it.
- If you had a time machine and you could travel ten years into the future, where would you be and what would you be doing do you think?
- Do you think that being in school and getting an education will affect your life? B) How?

School= individual growth

- I have looked at the book that you read in English and Xhosa, “Whitney’s Kiss”. Is this a good book, do you think? B) Why? ¹⁴
- Do you know about anyone that has been in the same situation the Whitney is in? B) Could you tell me how they handled the situation?
- Have you learned anything at school that you can make use of when you are at home with your family?
- In what ways has being in school changed you as a person?
- What do you think is the most important thing that you have learned in school? B) Why? In what way?

¹⁴ This question was only asked to the learners at school A.

Appendix C Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

Life at home

- Do you live far from school?
- What does your home look like?
- Do you have a good and quiet space to do your homework?
- Is there anyone at home that sometimes helps you with your homework?
- What do your mom and dad do?
- Do you have any brothers and sisters? Big family?
- What are your hobbies?
- If I was a little butterfly on your shoulder and I followed you home for the whole weekend, what would I see?
- Are you religious in your family?
- Yesterday we talked about feeling safe at school and how important that was. And that at school you felt safe most of the time. Are there any times at home that you don't feel safe? When?
- What is it that makes you happy?
- What is that makes you scared?
- What is it that makes you feel sad?
- (Do you have a boyfriend?)

Life at school

- Are you happy at school?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What is the best thing you like about going to school and learning? Why?
- What is the worst thing you know about school? Why?
- Do you feel that school is a good place to be?
- Do you have many friends at school? Boys or girls?
- Yesterday you said that it was good to learn English. Why do you think it is important to learn English- nr4?
- Yesterday we talked about your favorite teacher. Could you tell me what she does that makes her your favorite?
- How does she make you feel?
- You have been at this school for 7 years now, besides from miss? can you remember any other teachers that have been important to you?

- On Mondays and Friday mornings, I have seen that you have a morning assembly, say prayers and sing songs together. How do you feel about that? (Do you believe in God?)¹⁵
- In grade seven you have three teachers, two ladies and a man. How do the girls act in the classroom with the lady teacher?
- How do the girls act in the classroom with the man teacher?

Future

- Let's talk a little bit more about how you think your future will be like. You said that you wanted to be a ?. Do you know of any grown -ups that are that today? Do you look up to them?
- Yesterday we talked about the future- when you are doctor-/teacher in the future, do you also have a family?
- (If- boyfriend, what does he want to be when he grows up?)

¹⁵ This question was only asked to the learners at school A.

Appendix D Informed consent form for interview

Title of the study: Is education a tool of empowerment for girls?

Principal Investigator: Ingrid Ekne, Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education candidate

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Halla Björk Holmarsdottir, Oslo University College

Research: The purpose of this thesis is to examine how and in which ways education is a tool of empowerment. Through classroom observations and interviews I will investigate the school culture to get a picture of how the participants experience everyday life at school. By examining international, national and local educational policy discourse I will see if there is an actual relationship between policy and educational practice.¹⁶

Participation/Process: Participation consists of one interview, lasting approximately one hour. The interview will be audio taped unless otherwise requested by the participant.

Privacy will be insured through a confidentiality agreement. Participation is voluntary and the interviewee has the right to terminate the interview at any time. A summary of the results will be available to the participants upon request.

Participant's Understanding:

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial and fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Comparative and International Education at the University of Oslo.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research related usage authorized by the University of Oslo.
- I understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product.
- I am aware that all the records will be kept confidential in the secure position of the researcher.

¹⁶ The initial purpose of the study was to compare the findings up against international, national and local educational policy. This objective changed however, during the writing process, due to limitations of the study.

Appendix E Informed consent for classroom observation

Title of the study: Is education a tool of empowerment for girls?

Principal Investigator: Ingrid Ekne, Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education candidate

Institution: University of Oslo, Department of Education

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Halla Björk Holmarsdottir, Oslo University College

Research: The purpose of this thesis is to examine how and in which ways education is a tool of empowerment. Through classroom observations and interviews I will investigate the school culture to get a picture of how the participants experience everyday life at school. By examining international, national and local educational policy discourse I will see if there is an actual relationship between policy and educational practice.¹⁷

Participation/Process: The process consists of three-four days of classroom observations.

Privacy will be ensured through confidentiality. A summary of the results will be available to participants upon request.

Participant's Understanding:

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Comparative and International Education at the University of Oslo.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by the University of Oslo
- I understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product.
- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of

¹⁷ The initial purpose of the study was to compare the findings up against international, national and local educational policy. This objective changed however, during the writing process, due to limitations of the study.

the researcher.

Appendix F Summary of Whitney's Kiss

Translated from Xhosa to English by Nonjongo, my research assistant, and rewritten by the author.

Whitney is a 13 year old girl in her last year at primary school. Whitney is in love with lucky a 16 year old boy in secondary school. Whitney's teacher Mrs. Pillay caught Whitney and Lucky one afternoon when they were making out, and she was very disappointed in Whitney for being with an older boy. Mrs. Pillay wrote a note to Whitney's parents, who also got upset over Whitney's behavior. However, Whitney's parents had other worries. Her dad was a lot home from his workplace in Cape Town, because he was sick. Whitney's parents had told Whitney that her father had the flu, but one day her father had to go the hospital, and there they got they sad message that her dad was HIV positive. Whitney was very upset and wanted to hug and comfort her father, but she was afraid that if she hugged him, she would get the disease also.

Whitney's parents told her not to tell anyone about her father being HIV positive, because it would disgrace the family. However, Whitney could not hold the secret to herself for very long, because she needed someone to talk to. Whitney told her best friend at school, her boyfriend Lucky and her teacher Mrs. Pillay. Not many days after she had told them, her friends did no longer want to sit next to her or walk with her, because they thought they would become HIV positive. Whitney was upset and told them that it was not her, but her father who had the disease. She was sad and angry with Mrs. Pillay, because she thought that since Mrs. Pillay did not approve of her relationship with Lucky, she had been the one to spread the bad rumors. A short time after, Whitney's father died and Whitney felt very sad.

Lucky invited Whitney to his home and he said that if she did not come, it would mean that she did not love him. Whitney did not want to disappoint Lucky so she went to his home. When she got there he wanted to have sex with her, but she said that they had to wear a condom, but he refused and told her that it wouldn't be the same if he wore a condom. Just before she decided to go through with it anyway, thinking that nothing bad can happen if it only happens one time, she found a letter in his home from his ex-girlfriend. The letter reviled that the ex-girlfriend had gotten HIV after having sex with Lucky. Whitney was very

upset and angry with Lucky for not telling her that he was HIV positive also. She left his home in a hurry, but it was too far to walk home, so she went to Mrs.Pillay's home which was closer.

Whitney was very glad she went to and talked with Mrs. Pillay that evening, and many misunderstandings were cleared up. It was not Mrs.Pillay who had spread the rumors about her father being sick, but Lucky. And Mrs.Pillay told Whitney that she could come talk to her any time, and that she would always be there for her. Whitney was also encouraged by Mrs.Pillay to speak to the class about how a person catches HIV and that you can't catch the disease by hugging someone, or sitting next to them. Whitney also spoke to the class about being safe when being with a boy and that even only one time, might be enough to catch the disease.

